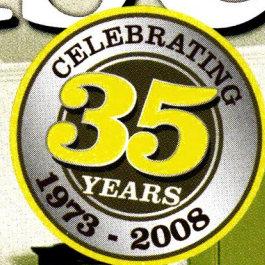


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by Mail

April 2008

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# Features

March/April 2008

Volume 36/ Number 2

Established 1973

### 40 **Kitchens and Their Cookers**

By GORDON BOCK

The kitchen may be the center of the home today, but the cooking range has been the center of the kitchen for nearly 200 years. Take a look back at the evolution of stoves over the centuries—and get some ideas on how to incorporate period-appropriate appliances into your own kitchen.

### 46 **A Tale of Two Sinks**

By LYNN ELLIOTT AND DEMETRA APOSPOROS

The choices for period-appropriate sinks are so vast that it's often hard to know where to begin selecting one. Our look at two homeowners who faced this dilemma (from their selection criteria to their installation issues) will make your choice much easier.

### 51 **Pictures in the Windows**

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In historic homes, highlighting a room's windows wasn't just about curtains. We explore the tradition of painting decorative scenes onto window shades.

### 54 **Plaster in Relief**

By JACOB ARNDT

Plaster isn't always synonymous with the word "flat"—textured plaster was common in many Spanish and Tudor interiors in the early 20th century. An expert shows how to recreate this lost art in your own home.

### 60 **Floor Repair Pointers**

By THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL TECHNICAL STAFF

The beauty of old homes often lies in their original oak, maple, and pine floors—but after a few generations, these boards can start to show signs of wear. Our guide will help you deal with common problems, from patching holes to silencing squeaks.

### 64 **The Short Course on Cabinet Hinges**

By DEMETRA APOSPOROS

Fitting old cabinets with new hinges can be an exercise in frustration without some basic knowledge of their original hardware. Learn how these old hinges worked, why they were special, and what substitutions you can use today.

### 66 **Old-House Living: Double Recovery**

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While bringing a George Barber building back to life, an old-house owner in Knoxville, Tennessee, finds relief from his own debilitating illness.

### 70 **Dream Houses by Mail**

By JAMES C. MASSEY & SHIRLEY MAXWELL

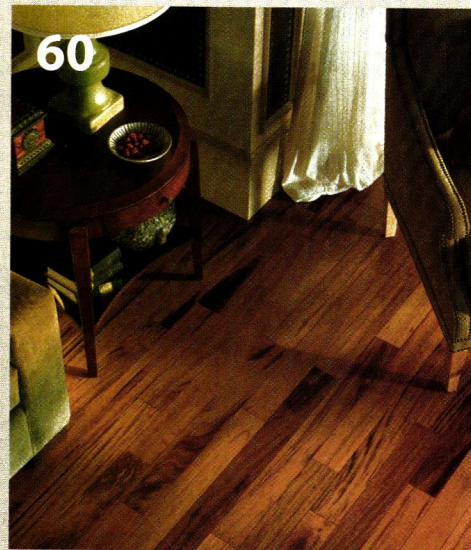
The still-popular tradition of selling house plans by catalog traces its roots all the way back to the 1870s. Our historians explain who these early mail-order pioneers were, and how they propagated the countryside with built versions of their designs.



#### ON THE COVER:

Modular cabinets and continuous countertops show the influence of early-20th-century efficiency studies in this warm, inviting old-house kitchen.

Photo by Brad Simmons/Beateworks/Corbis





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Like old houses, ancient apple trees often need some work to regain the beauty of their youth.

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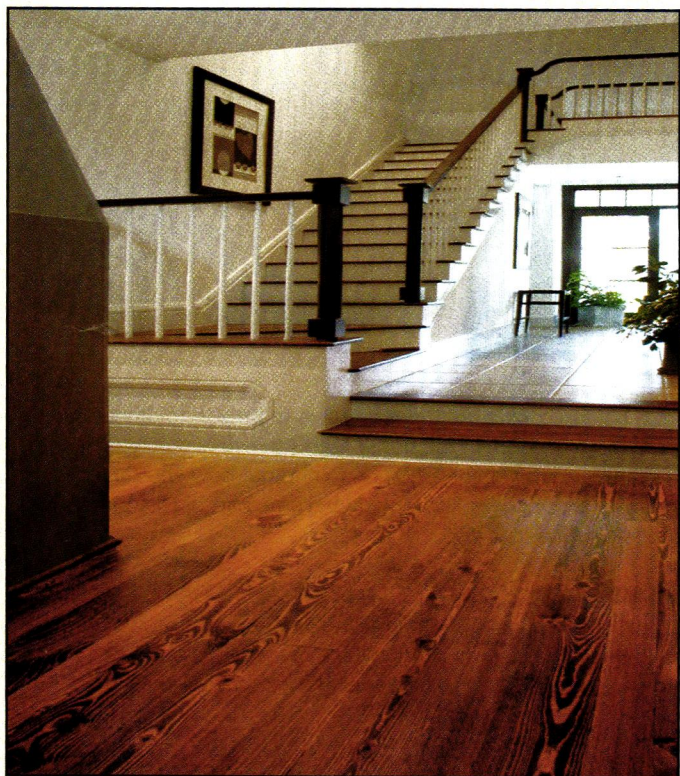
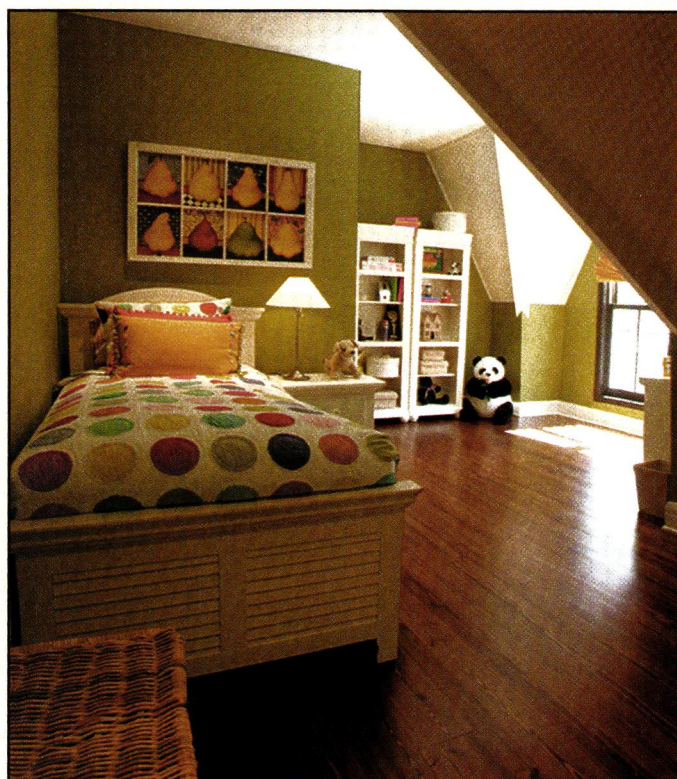
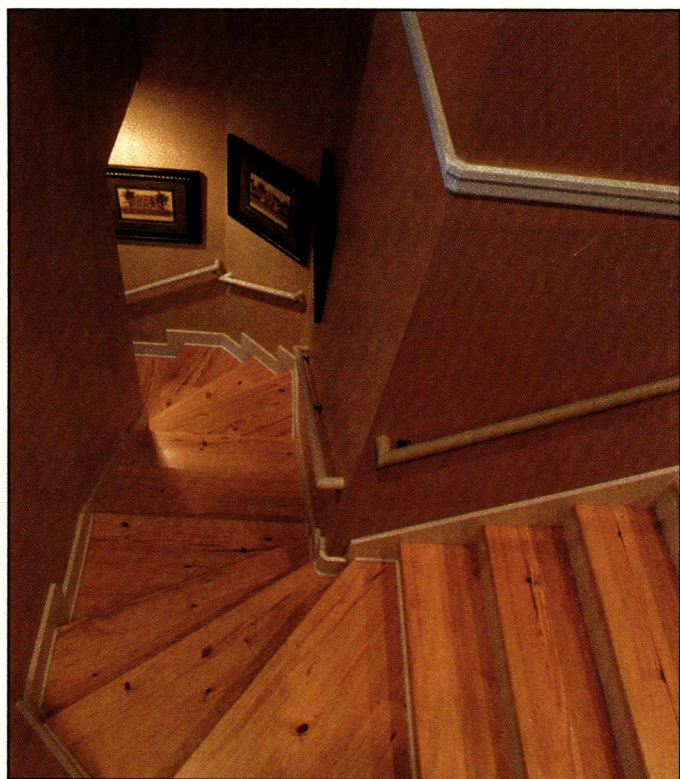


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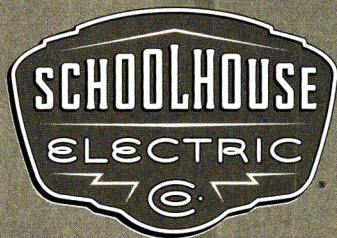
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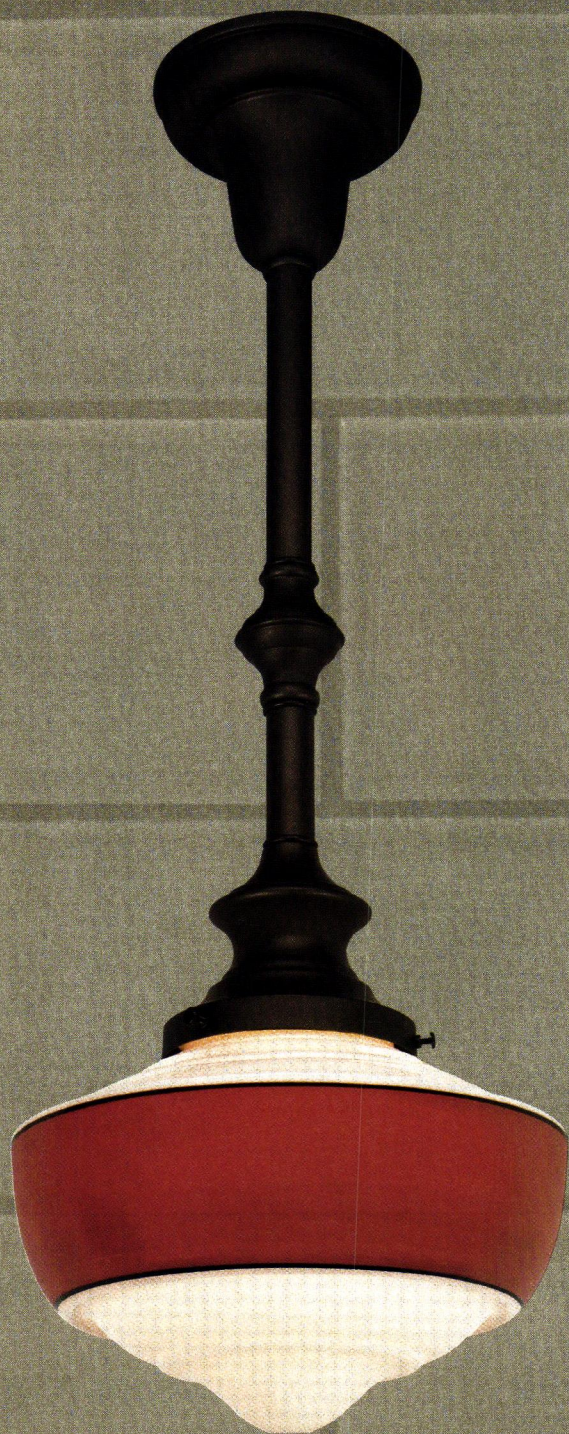
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### A Kitchen Story

From baking cookies with our mothers to preparing dinner parties for friends, no room in the home seems to evoke precious memories quite like the kitchen. Log on to find out how you can share the story of your own kitchen and become part of Historic New England's America's Kitchens project.

### Must-Have Pruning Tools

Ready to get to work on remodeling your old, overgrown apple tree? Before you start plotting which branches to snip, check out our showcase of tools all gardeners should have in their sheds.

### Make a Smooth Move

The task of moving a historic house from one location to another is not to be undertaken lightly—but we've got some essential tips that will make the process a lot less stressful.

### Have You Seen This House?

While many early mail-order homes often sprung up side by side, making them easy to find and identify, our historians have tracked down one plan that's proved puzzlingly elusive to locate in the field. We'll tell you how you can help them solve this mystery.





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## Connecting with Kitchens

Years of letters and photos prove that, in one regard, *Old-House Journal* readers are no different than most folks: You love kitchens, rating them as the most important room in a house for changes and investments. To help with the process, we've devoted this issue to some common areas of interest for creating kitchens that balance sensitivity to history with a modern lifestyle.

Part of the trick is getting a handle on what defines a kitchen for any era. If your point of reference is the late 19th century or early 20th century, the touchstones are not so much decorative or stylistic details, but new technologies—first running water for sinks, then better ways to cook, and eventually gas and electricity for lighting and other wonders they made possible. Subtler but more influential, though, are the once-new ideas on the overall size, organization, and use of a kitchen, ideas that continued to change every couple of decades with the shifts in house styles and the social forces behind them.

For example, at the turn of the 20th century, the modern kitchen was already morphing from the large, servant-staffed pantries and work areas of the Victorian household to smaller, family-oriented versions where compactness was key. Efficiency had been on the minds of kitchen thinkers since the 1870s, but it took on new fervor in the Ragtime era. Back then, Frederick Winslow Taylor demonstrated that industries, from factories to railroads, could improve productivity by studying the motions of workers with a stopwatch. Taylorism, as the concept was called, spread through America like a true gospel, also leaving its mark on kitchens. By 1910, authorities and designers were promoting kitchens based on what was called the "buffet plan," where shelves, drawers, coolers, and food bins were arranged in the condensed, economical area of one room. "The modern feminine mind," wrote architect Henry L. Wilson, "is quick to grasp the value of all devices that minimize the drudgery of housekeeping."

Progressive thinking—and a new understanding of disease and germ theory—came on strong, too, and a natural target, along with bathrooms, was the kitchen. Eliminating dust-catching corners, voids, and horizontal surfaces of all kinds became a sort of holy grail. So did reducing the hiding places for insects, vermin, and microbes through the use of innovative materials like concrete and linoleum. New freedoms and opportunities for women helped precipitate the dreaded, devastating plague of the growing suburbs: The Servant Problem. Suddenly, it was all a middle-class household could do to hang on to a single cook or maid—at best on a part-time basis. Manufacturers, of course, saw an opportunity in this adversity, and did their best to replace paid help with a parade of labor-saving appliances and low-maintenance floors and cabinetry.

So if you own a kitchen dating from the 1890s or later, or are looking for inspiration from any decade since then, remember that it's not just particulars like cream and green colors or woods versus plastics that drive the look of a modern kitchen from any era. It's also a result of the people who brought them into being, their thinking, and the times in which they used them.



*Gordon Bock*

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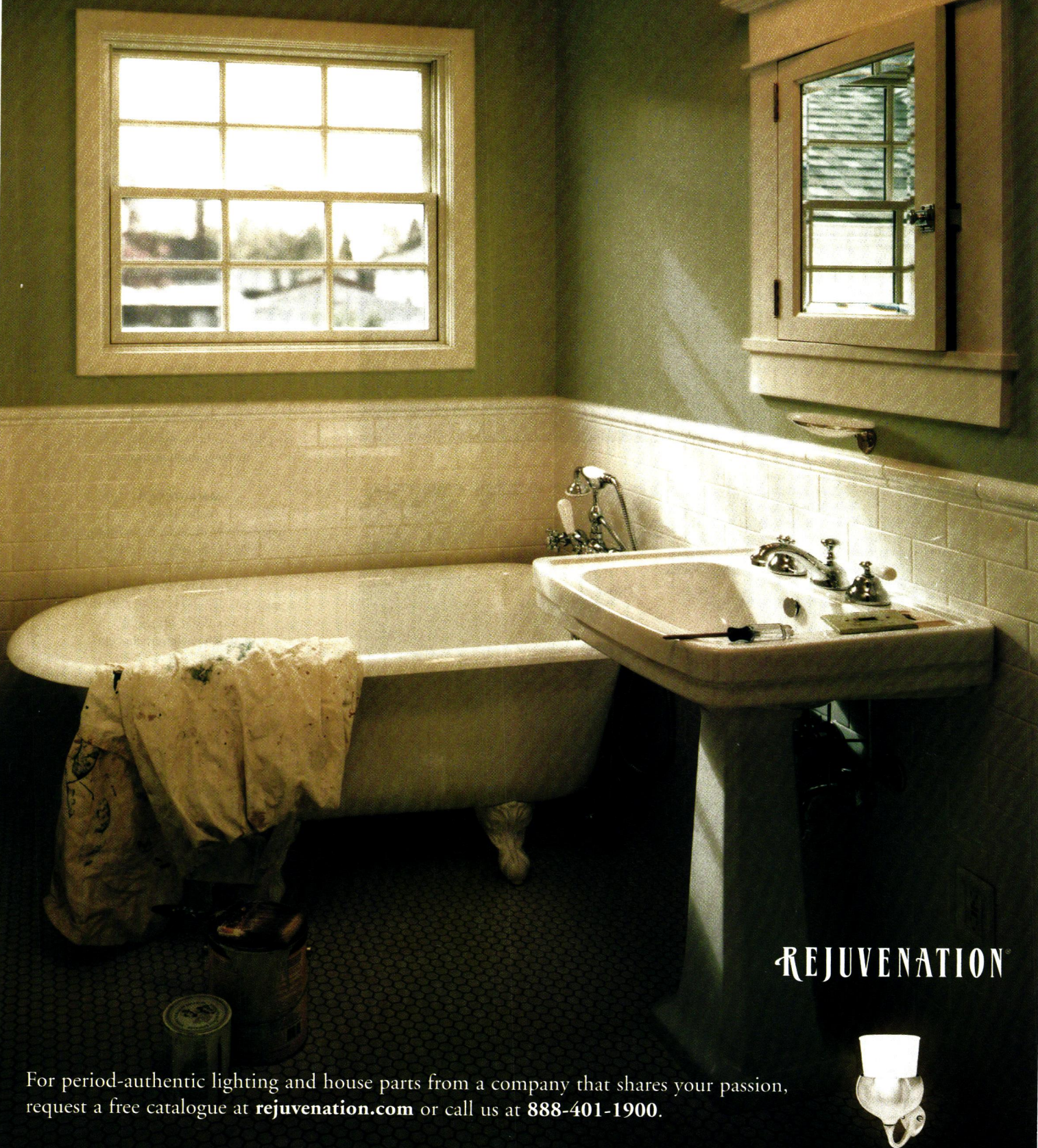
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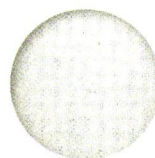
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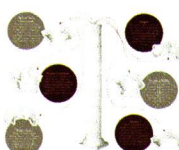
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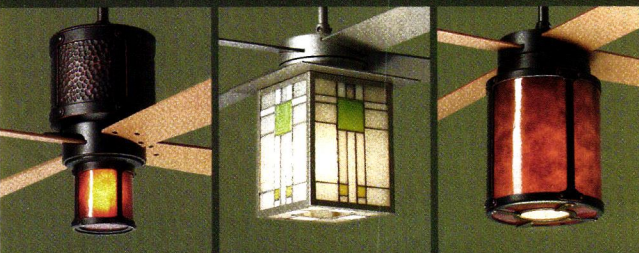


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## Letters

### Old-House Detectives

On the sixth page of your story on circular rooms ["Refreshing Rooms-in-the-Round," January/February 2008], you featured an image of windows trimmed with a distinctive moulding. Do you know the name of this style of moulding? We have the same type on a door in the circa-1885 house that we recently purchased and are planning to restore. We're having trouble trying to find out what style the house is, and any clues you can give us would be of great help.

Tammy Zimmerman  
Via e-mail



While we're not certain of its proper name, we do know that this type of moulding, with its rosette-style corner blocks, was fairly common in Victorian homes. Our Restoration Directory has a list of companies making reproduction millwork (such as Vintage Woodworks) that might be able to tell you more. —Eds.

### Linoleum Lovers

Reading your linoleum rugs article ["Lie Like a Rug," November/December 2007] brought back memories of our own amazing discovery—we found this intact art rug [right] that appears to be from the 1920s under a wall-to-wall carpet and another layer of 1950s sheet flooring. The stain came off easily, and it is now in use in the refinished room. Because we were hesitant to take it out of the room (for fear of cracking it), we scooted it from corner to corner while painting the exposed floor. We had purchased wallpaper long before we found the rug, so it was a lucky coincidence that everything in the room ended up looking great together.



Bronwyn Nelson  
Portland, Maine

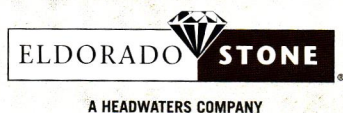
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## Calendar

March 12-15

BOSTON, MA

### Traditional Building Show

The rich architectural history of Boston provides the backdrop for more than 70 workshops, seminars, and tours, with topics ranging from historic paint colors to sustainable building. In addition to hundreds of exhibitors, the show floor will also feature live demonstrations. (202) 339-0744; [www.traditionalbuildingshow.com](http://www.traditionalbuildingshow.com)

March 13-April 12

CHARLESTON, SC

### Festival of Houses and Gardens

The city's annual spring-time celebration of its historic homes kicks off with an opening-weekend antiques show. Daily tours highlight the interiors of nearly 150 of Charleston's magnificent private residences. (843) 722-3405; [www.historiccharleston.org](http://www.historiccharleston.org)

March 30

PASADENA, CA

### Postwar Pasadena

A tour of six private homes showcases the innovations in modern architecture that put Pasadena on the design map following World War II. The homes are open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and tickets are \$35 in advance or \$40 on the day of the tour. (626) 441-6333; [www.pasadenaheritage.com](http://www.pasadenaheritage.com)

April 21-24

DENVER, CO

### AIC Annual Meeting

With a theme of "Creative Collaborations," this year's meeting of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works will include a variety of hands-on workshops, lectures, tours, and exhibit sessions. (202) 452-9545; [www.aic.org](http://www.aic.org)



## Old House Fair Returns to Philly

After a few years off, the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia's Old House Fair came back on the scene in 2007, and returns this year to the Germantown Friends School Fieldhouse on March 22 with 75 exhibitors and a range of presentations and lectures. An "Ask the Experts" area will provide free 15-minute consultations to address your most pressing restoration concerns, while "Color Doctor" John Crosby Freeman (a frequent OHJ contributor) will be on hand to provide advice on exterior paint colors. For more information about this year's fair, call

215-546-1146, or visit [www.preservationalliance.com](http://www.preservationalliance.com).

## Preservation Goes Green

For years, preservationists have held fast to the idea that the restoration of historic structures is a green practice. Indeed, restoring and reusing older buildings, rather than tearing them down to make way for new construction, is one of the key tenets of sustainable architecture. But as the hype around environmentally friendly building practices and materials continues to grow, many communities and organizations are experimenting with ways to make historic preservation even greener.

One of the cities at the forefront of this trend is Chicago, where eight years ago Mayor Richard Daley founded the Historic Chicago Bungalow Initiative, tasked with providing resources and funding for renovation of the city's 80,000 bungalows. Priority number one for the project? Making the homes more energy efficient—while preserving their historic character, of course.

"We really promote the concept that a home's original windows will last a lot longer than most people think," says Annette Conti, the program's executive director. "Instead of policing the installation of vinyl windows, we encourage people to contact companies who can restore their original windows."

In addition to guiding homeowners toward preservation-minded companies, providing restoration guidelines, and offering grants for efficiency upgrades, the program has also created three Green Bungalow Model Blocks, where rehabbed homes showcase up-and-coming technology like radiant heating and denim-scrap insulation.



COURTESY HISTORIC CHICAGO BUNGALOW ASSOCIATION

**The Belmont-Cragin neighborhood in northwest Chicago received a makeover during the 2007 Green Bungalow Model Block project.**

"Each year, we choose a new neighborhood where we can test our ideas," Annette says. "The public is learning as we are learning."

Green preservation efforts are starting to pick up steam in other places, too—in 2006, Pittsburgh hosted the Greening of Historic Properties National Summit, while the Boston architecture firm Goody Clancy is leading green preservation efforts in that city. The National Trust even launched its own Sustainability Initiative in 2006 to help promote the inherent environmental benefits of restoration, including pushing for a revision of current LEED standards (the U.S. Green Building Council's program for evaluating green construction) to give more clout to the reuse and preservation of existing structures.

For tips on incorporating green practices into your own restoration projects, check out [www.nationaltrust.org/green](http://www.nationaltrust.org/green) or [www.wbdg.org/resources/sustainable\\_hp.php](http://www.wbdg.org/resources/sustainable_hp.php).



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## Books in Brief

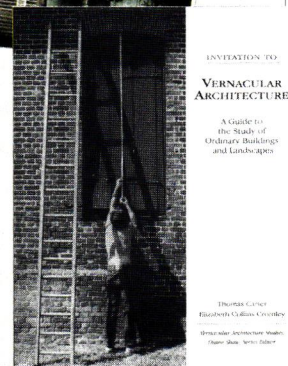
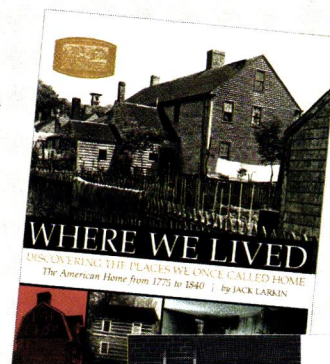
Those who have spent any time considering residential architecture know that a house is more than just four walls and a roof—it's also a tangible testament to the history of its inhabitants. Indeed, one of the more fascinating components of the study of historic architecture is the fact that the mere profile of a moulding or the type of nails used to affix a beam can provide countless bits of information about the way people lived during that time period.

In *Invitation to Vernacular Architecture*, authors Thomas Carter and Elizabeth Collins Cromley take an anthropological approach toward discovering the histories of old buildings, providing a concrete blueprint for anyone interested in a thorough study of common structures from our past. In unfailingly practical prose, Carter and Cromley walk readers through the various steps involved in developing an in-depth vernacular architecture study, from the initial site survey to the interpretation of gathered data. A case study on a turn-of-the-century Buffalo home puts these principles into action, showing how a little old-house detective work can pay rich dividends.

For the more casual old-house enthusiast, the National Trust's *Where We Lived* does the heavy lifting for you, drawing from its immense collection of Depression-era photographs

from the Historic American Buildings Survey to create a pictorial walk-through of the iconic building styles of America's earliest days.

Moving from the basic log houses of early settlers to the grand Greek Revival mansions of well-to-do New Englanders, author Jack Larkin relies on a wide variety of letters and journal entries to weave together a compelling tale of the ways in which housing trends reflected the fledgling prosperity of our young country. He leaves no stone unturned, exploring everything from the evolution of the commode to the marked disparity between owners' and slaves' quarters on Southern plantations, and in doing so provides substantial evidence of the indelible link between our buildings and our cultural history.



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## Row House or Town House?

While photographing Victorian architecture in Newport, Kentucky, I snapped these nice urban houses. What can you tell me about them?

*Jonathan Hale  
Watertown, Massachusetts*

**F**ound in the earliest American cities and built ever since in urban areas, the row house is the classic multiple house. In its most common form, it is a linear formation—i.e., a row—of three or more buildings that share with their neighbors a common wall, also called a party wall, leaving no space between them. Row houses are most often two or three storeys high, and usually three bays wide (two windows and a front door). Modern versions often make a conscious effort to vary the height and detailing of each building, and are regularly called townhouses in real estate parlance.

Like many row houses of the 19th century, these Kentucky buildings are textbook examples of Italianate detailing. Each shows a heavy, bracketed cornice on top of the main façade and pronounced hoods capping the



windows. Also typical for Italianate houses are the quoin blocks that decorate the corners. What defies the strict definition a bit is the way each dwelling is unconnected to its neighbor. If the houses were joined two-by-two, they might be called twin or double houses. Given that they are all detached—as is the case with many similar buildings in small cities—some architectural historians opt to call such closely spaced buildings townhouses to distinguish them from connected row houses.

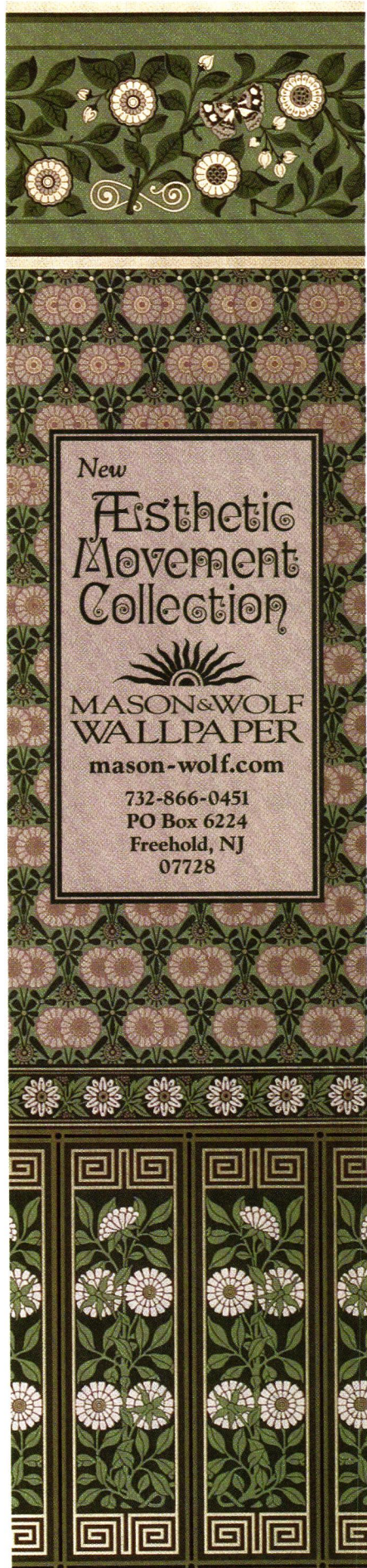
## Dealing with Damp

I have a 1870s brick house with plaster applied directly to the masonry walls. Though the basement is totally dry, one wall has rising damp bad enough that I have to fix the plaster every few years. Any ideas?

*Diane Lynn  
Denver, Colorado*

**R**ising damp is a condition where porous building materials, such as masonry, become saturated with groundwater and effectively wick moisture up a structure like a wall or column. The pore structure of the material encourages capillary action, causing the water to rise vertically as it evaporates to the surface. A telltale sign of rising damp is an off-white stain or “tide mark” of efflorescence that

appears a couple of feet above grade where the moisture evaporates. True rising damp is usually a consequence of a high water table or a hidden water source and is not easy to control. However, rather than go off the deep end and assume you have this extreme condition, first look for more mundane, lateral sources of water, such as leaky gutters that wash down walls or poor grading and water run-off at the foundation line. Hiring a consultant to measure the moisture content of the wall at various locations can help pinpoint the problem. For an excellent background on the subject, read Preservation Brief # 39 “Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture In Historic Buildings” (online at [www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief39.htm](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief39.htm)).



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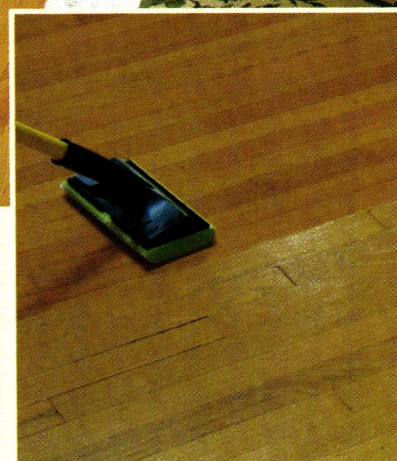


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## Kitchen Dresser

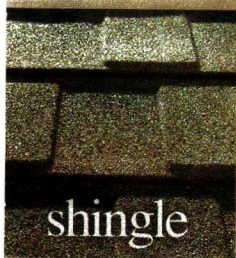
**B**anks of continuous, modular cabinets are all but ubiquitous in kitchens today, but prior to the Depression, any home with cabinetwork for food prep probably had a tall piece of casework called a kitchen dresser. Appearing in upscale houses by the 1880s and still common well into the 1930s, kitchen dressers were a base of drawers and bins (for utensils and foodstuffs) that supported a shallow cabinet of shelves enclosed by doors and topped by a cornice. Dressers could be ordered knocked-down from millworks catalogs by the 1920s, but many more were built on site from plans, such as the 1924 garden-variety design presented here.



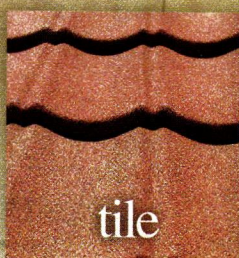
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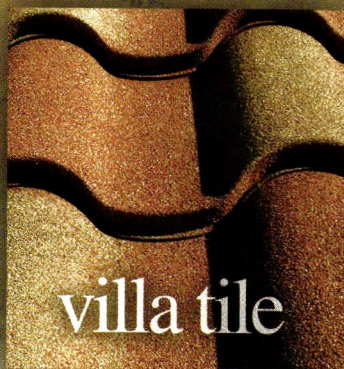
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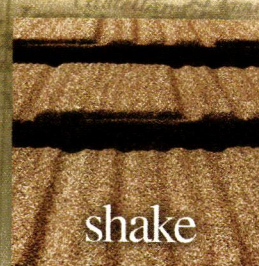
shingle



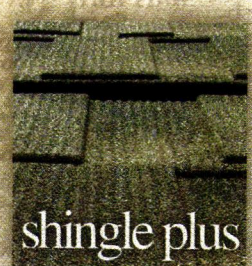
tile



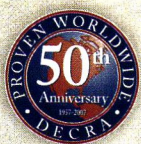
villa tile



shake



shingle plus

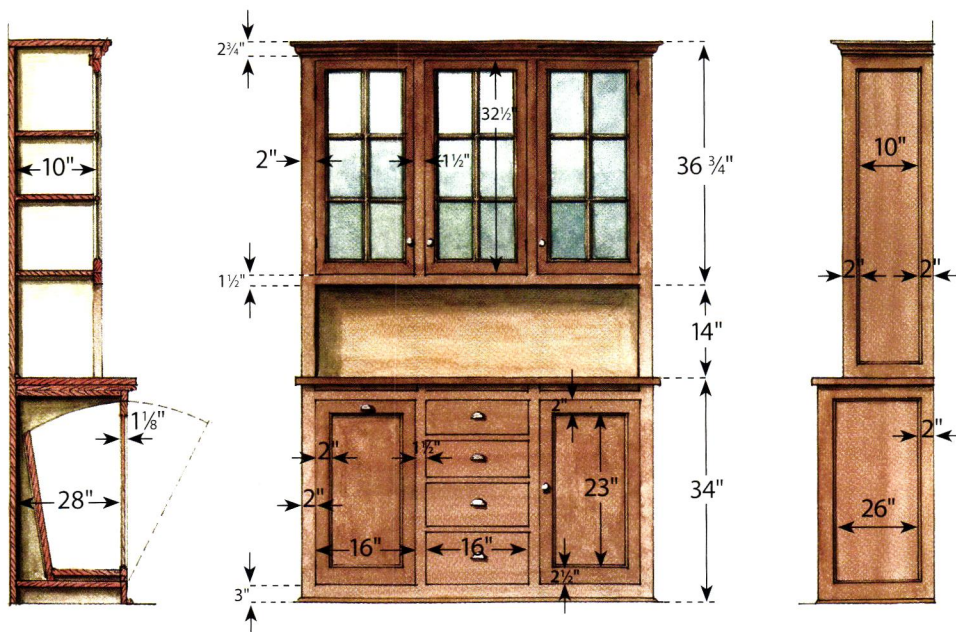


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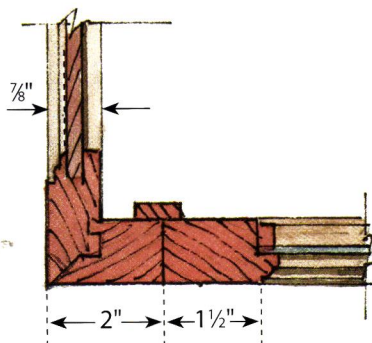




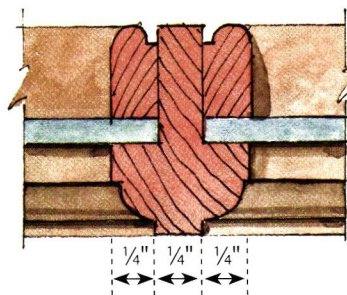
A typical example of traditional cabinet construction, this kitchen dresser is basically two face frames attached to two pairs of side panels. The top frame holds a set of glazed doors and, in this design, connects to the panels with a locked miter joint to make a neat corner. The bottom panel uses the same joint and holds a stack of drawers flanked by a solid-panel door on one side and a bin on the other (originally for flour but ideal for recyclables today). A nice feature is the trio of sandwich boards that slide out from under the counter using finger pulls on their bottom edges.

Mechanical details, such as the construction and support of

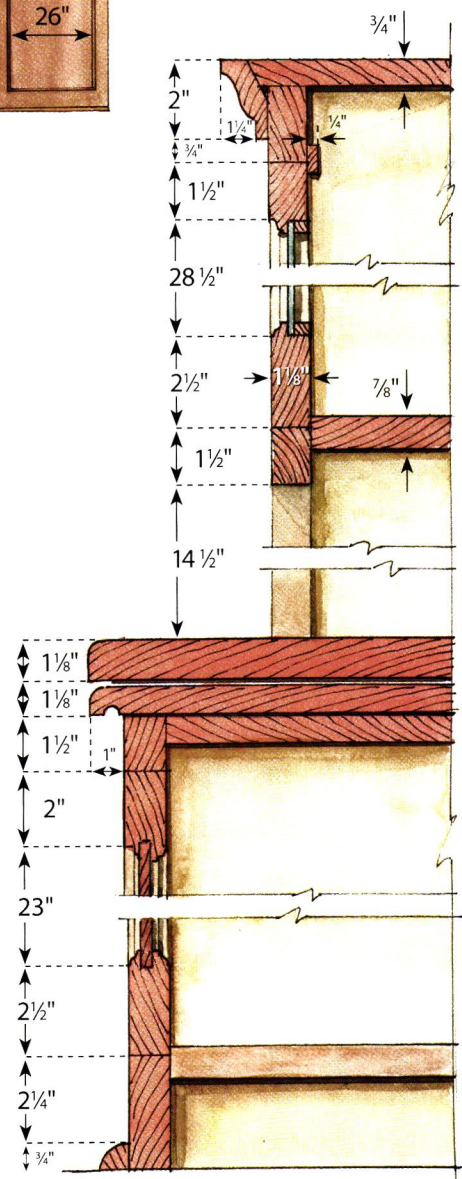
drawers, are left up to the builder so as to take advantage of modern cabinet technology like roller slides or plate joinery. In the same way, the stylistic details of the dresser could be varied easily to blend with the era of the house. For example, a Victorian version might switch the flat panels in the sides to beadboard, support the upper cabinet with knee brackets, and use a heavier cornice at the top. In contrast, eliminating the ovolo edge in the doors, muntins, and panel frames in lieu of a square edge, and topping the dresser with a plain board instead of a cornice would produce an Arts & Crafts feel. ■



**Section through upper cabinet corner**



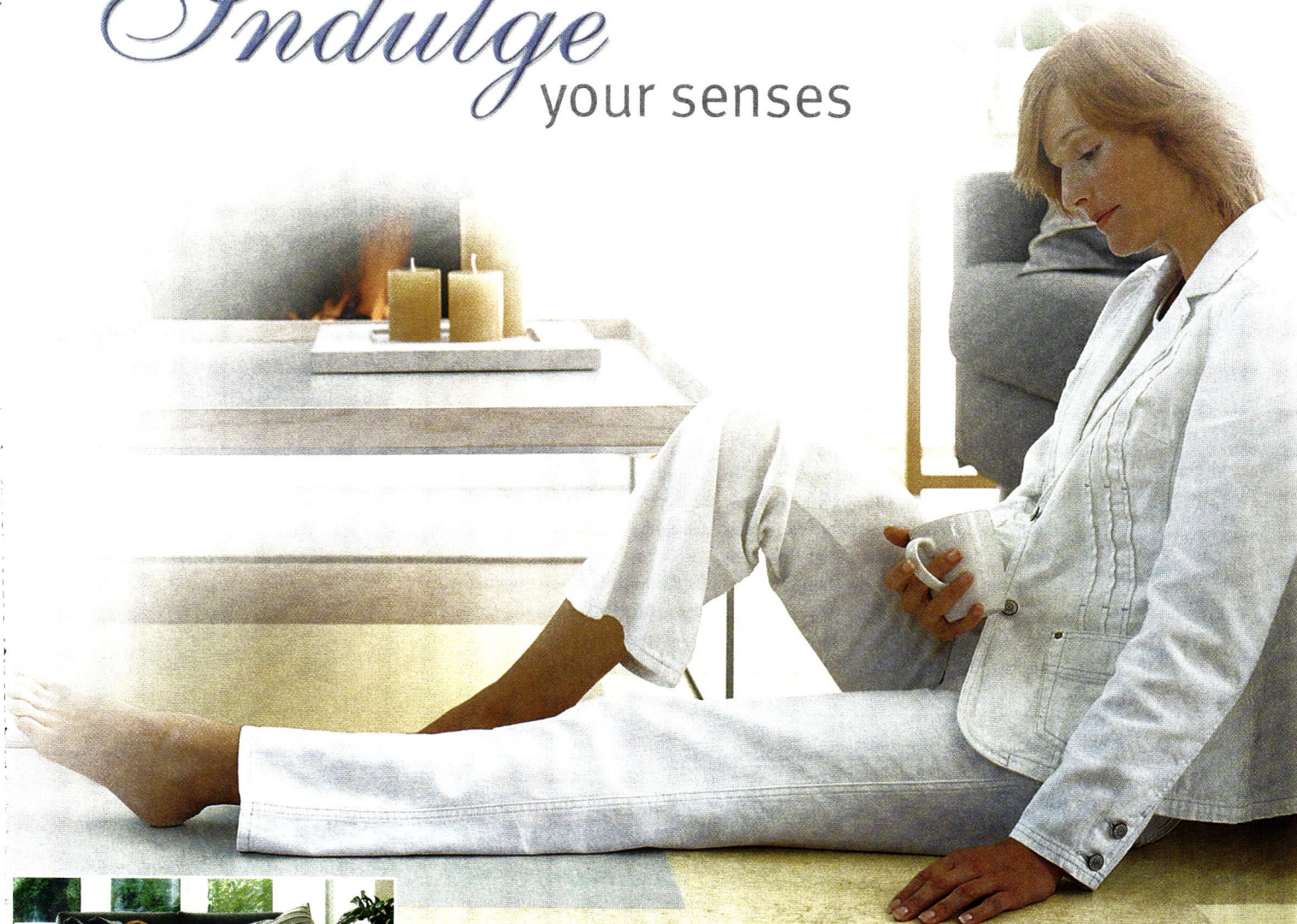
**Section through door muntin**





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# Fine Design

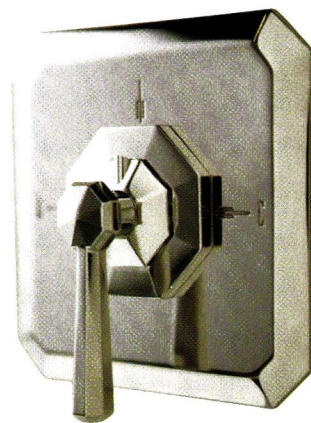
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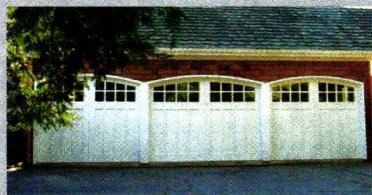


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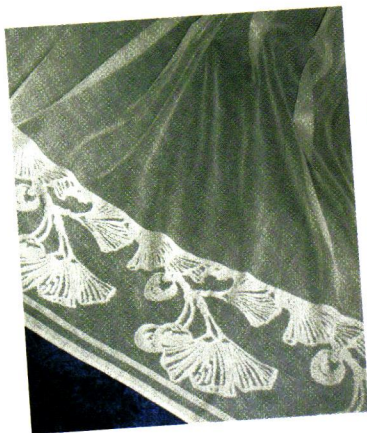
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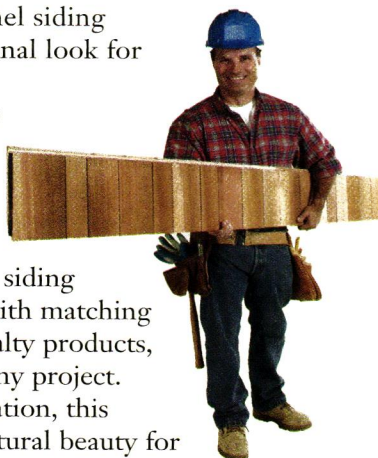


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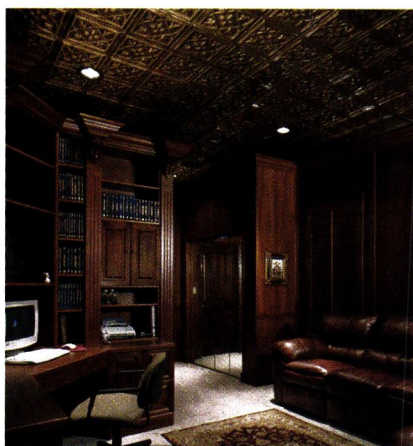
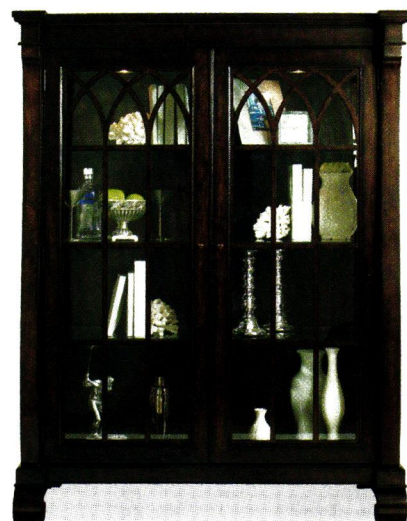
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# Outside the Old House



Renovated trees have a pleasant, full shape and bear fruit within easy reach.

BELOW: Neglected trees are tall and gangly, with fruit atop towering branches.

## Invigorating Old Apple Trees

*Despite years of neglect, with pruning, trees can find new life—and bear delicious fruits—once more.*

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY LEE REICH

Inheriting an ancient apple tree with your old house can be a mixed blessing. It will offer snowballs of blooms in the spring, the scent of ripening apples in autumn, and wizened, charming branches year-round, but its fruits will probably be small, pest-ridden, and not that tasty. That's because apple trees need regular care to produce quality fruit. Luckily, you can return most old apple trees to bearing seductive, delicious fruits with a pruning technique known as renovation (a concept already familiar to most old-house owners).

Without regular pruning, apple trees grow taller and taller to become top heavy, with upper branches that block sunlight from reaching the lower ones. Fruits—especially luscious fruits—

require lots of energy to produce, and that energy ultimately comes from sunlight. Subsequently, any fruits borne by old, neglected trees appear mostly on the uppermost fringe of branches, where sunlight is plentiful. At this upper canopy, the fruits can be numerous but they are usually undersized and lacking in flavor, and they are also out of reach without the help of a tall ladder.

Before you decide to renovate your old apple tree and start it on the road to delicious glory, ask yourself some questions. First, can you commit to caring for the tree, which involves annual pruning? Second, is it sited in the right place? In order to thrive, apple trees need six or more hours of direct sunlight per day in the summer—light that may have been



more readily available decades ago, before other landscaping and neighborhood development took root. Lastly, do the tree's shape and the flavor of the fruit warrant renovation? The 'rose-colored palate' by which we judge our own tree's fruit can overcome only so much neglect. If you answered no to any of these questions, forget about trying to renovate the tree. Just take it down to ground level with a chainsaw.





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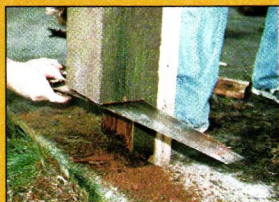
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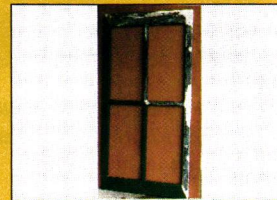
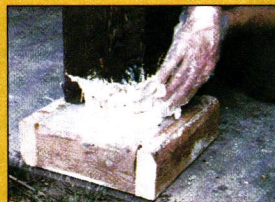
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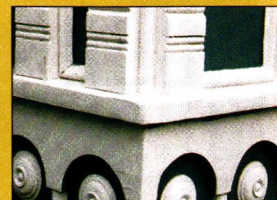
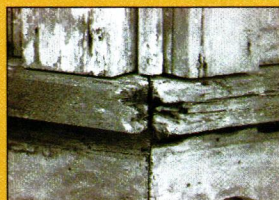
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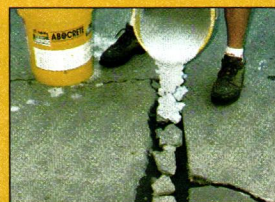
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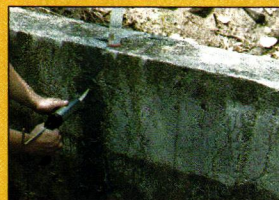
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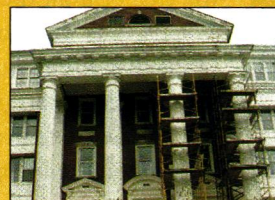
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**Thinning apple spurs encourages healthy new growth, resulting in tastier fruit.**

## Making the Cut

Apple tree renovation has several goals:

**1) lowering branches**, giving the tree a pleasant shape and putting fruit within easy reach; **2) opening all limbs** to basking in sunlight; **3) reducing the total number of apples** produced so that more energy gets pumped into the remaining fruit. (More energy translates into fruits of bigger size and better flavor.) Renovation involves drastic pruning, so it's best to spread the process out over the course of two to four years to avoid shocking the tree. Depending upon your pruning experience and the size of the limbs you need to trim (which may be substantial), consider hiring a professional arborist to make some of the cuts.

The best time for renovation is late winter or early spring because you can easily see the tree's structure before leaves start growing, and pruning wounds heal quickly at this time. To start, look for the tallest limbs on your tree. Then visually follow those limbs down to the point where they attach to the trunk or a strong side limb. You're looking for the connection of a healthy branch that occurs near a good post-renovation height for the tree—10 to 15 feet is ideal if you're averse to climbing ladders, like me—and one that will help the tree maintain a pleasing form. Once identified, this is where you will make the first pruning cut. Take a deep breath, and use a sharp bow saw or chainsaw to cut the limb off. In one fell swoop, you've lowered the tree and let light access the remaining branches. Repeat this process on one or two more of the tallest limbs, with an eye toward keeping a nice shape as you lower the tree and thin it out.

From here, you'll make increasingly finer cuts. No doubt your tree has a number of dead, diseased, or broken branches; cut them down to healthy wood, which you can identify by its light-colored interior. Next, tackle the waterspouts—vigorous, vertical shoots rising within the tree or from the ground beside the trunk. Waterspouts will block sunlight to other parts of the tree, so cut them away completely unless they are particularly well-positioned to become part of the tree's new main framework. Then look within the canopy of branches for any thin, drooping, weak stems. Shorten these stems so they no longer droop, and thin them out wherever they are crowded.



**Vigorous, vertically growing waterspouts can also block sunlight; most should be removed.**

## Fine-tuning Pruning

While your pruning effort has removed some flower buds (and potential fruits), don't worry about displacing too many. Each bud opens to five flowers, and apple trees need just five percent of their flowers to develop fruit in order to produce a good crop of apples. In addition, apple trees bear fruit on very short stems called 'spurs,' which elongate just a fraction of an inch each year. Over time, these stubby spurs get crowded and decrepit, and must be thinned in order to coax new growth. So continue the fine-tuned pruning by completely clearing away some spurs, and taking a side branch or two off of others. Lastly, refresh the tree's attractive mottled bark by rubbing it with a balled-up piece of chicken wire, to remove loose flakes and help limit pests.

You've now finished renovation for the season. As spring turns into summer, you'll notice new waterspouts developing close to your pruning cuts; grab them by hand as they appear and



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# Outside the Old House



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remove them with a sharp downward pull. If a few waterspouts sprout low on the tree in good position to build a new framework of future limbs, leave them alone.

Repeat this entire renovation procedure for two or three years. After this time, your tree will have a new shape

from old limbs that have retained their charm, become more productive, and be well on the road to its former glory. 🏡

*Lee Reich has authored many books about gardening, including The Pruning Book, which covers a variety of pruning techniques in-depth.*



Make initial cuts on large branches connected at a good post-renovation height.

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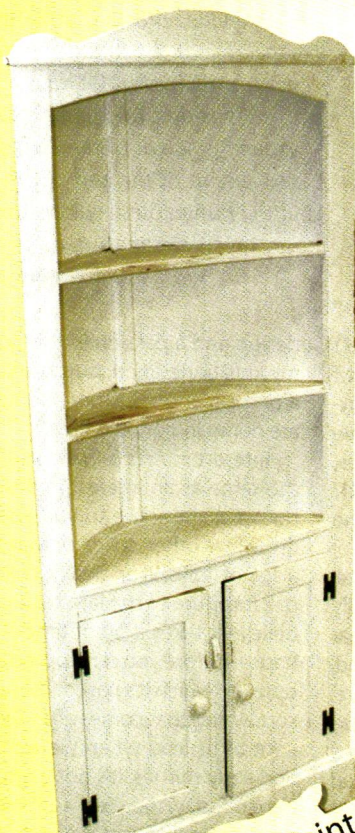
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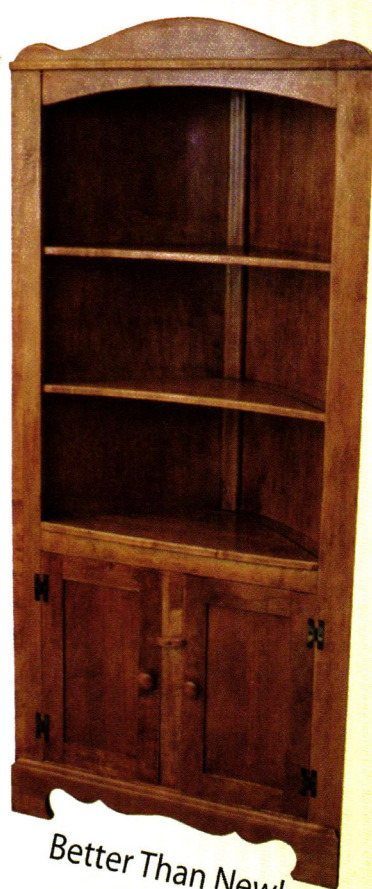
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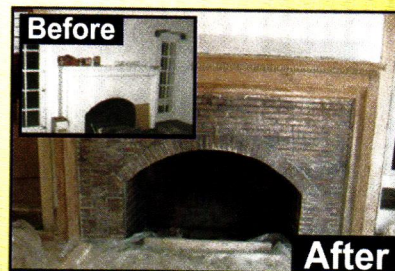


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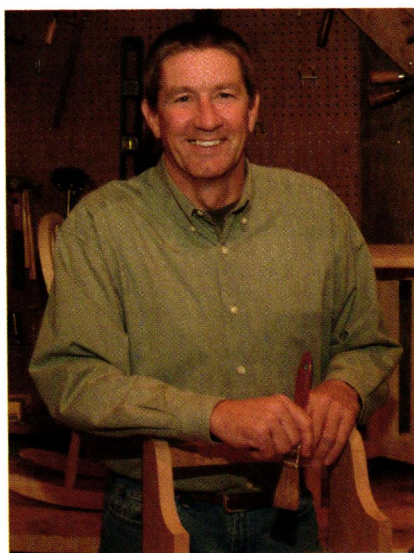
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# 35th Anniversary Interview



For the second in our series of 35th Anniversary Interviews, we caught up with Bruce Johnson, an expert wood finisher, prolific author, and decorative arts authority best known to many OHJ readers as the director of the annual Grove Park Inn Arts & Crafts Conference in Asheville, North Carolina. With his perspective as the founder of this seminal event, now in its 21st year, Bruce is in natural position to comment on the ever-growing revival of the Arts & Crafts movement of the early 20th century, and the bungalows, oak-y furniture, and mossy green ceramics that have become its most visible totems.

**Gordon Bock:** Back in 1973 when OHJ began, the Arts & Crafts movement of the early 20th century was all but forgotten. Now, the current revival seems to be everywhere in books, magazines, movies, and furnishings. Do you call it a revival? What keeps it going beyond the life of the original movement?

**Bruce Johnson:** Yes, I use the term revival, but with a different view than what it usually implies. Seen from the 21st century, it's clear that interest in the Arts & Crafts is not a fad, not a hula-hoop thing. It's always been there, just in the background at times. The current revival came about because of a need for qualities that the movement supplied—among them, houses and furnishings that lasted longer, looked better, and were sensitive to and integrated with their environment. For this reason, Arts & Crafts appeals to people who have never even heard of the movement, its history, or the name.

I grew up in the 1950s and early '60s, a time that is remembered for three innovations in residential design: tract homes, plywood, and spray-on nitrocellulose lacquer finishes for furniture. These seemed to evolve into a lot of novelties by the late 1960s. After a couple of decades of this stuff, I believe the search was on for houses and objects with real substance, just as the birth of the Arts & Crafts movement in the 1890s was a reaction against the superficial decoration of the Victorian era.

**GB:** There's an old line that we collect not what appealed to our parents, but what our grandparents admired and bought. In terms of the Arts & Crafts, any ideas on what's turning on Gen-Xers or folks in their twenties and early thirties?

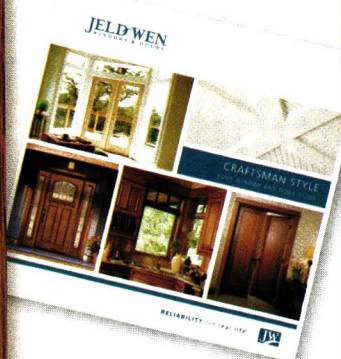
**BJ:** My respect for antiques came from my grandmother, who had a real interest in

design and a passion for history. It may skip my kids' generation, but their kids may have a passion about history and what you and I are doing in our own time.

Interest in Arts & Crafts furnishings is not the same as an interest in designer jeans. It becomes attractive to you after you're tried on a few other styles or ways of life. (Like a lot of folks, I originally collected golden oak furniture of the late 19th century!) I also believe it takes a bit of time—maturity perhaps—before you can appreciate the philosophy on which it's based. This appreciation is something that comes after the nomadic life a lot of us lead when we're in our twenties and early thirties. It's not a price point issue, either. Today, there are some very good and very affordable Arts & Crafts objects being made.

**GB:** The first time I attended the Grove Park Inn Conference in the early 1990s, interest in Arts & Crafts architecture—whether architect-designed houses or catalog bungalows—seemed minor compared to furniture and decorative works. Now it seems the architectural interest has grown—do you agree?

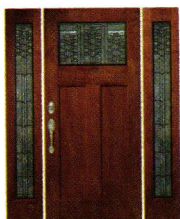
**BJ:** Absolutely, I agree 100 percent. The Arts & Crafts Conference attempts to reflect trends and be a marketplace for ideas. Yes, the Arts & Crafts revival began with the interest in the furniture of Gustav Stickley and the Roycrofters, but it doesn't end there. Many folks have found that if you happen to have Arts & Crafts furniture, it isn't necessarily an ideal fit with every style or era of house. However, the bungalows of the 1910s were designed for a simpler life—one where people didn't want servants—and they are a perfect complement to Arts & Crafts furniture and the Arts & Crafts philosophy.



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## 35th Anniversary Interview

**GB:** There's clearly a neo Arts & Crafts design movement afoot for new buildings, from houses to hotels. Is this a retro phenomenon, or an idea whose time has come again and will continue?

**BJ:** Interest in Arts & Crafts houses is definitely hot now, and this includes new buildings for a couple of reasons. First, of course, there's a finite number of real, original bungalows available for people to own and care for. Second, as with Arts & Crafts furniture and decorative objects, there are two trends. In furniture, for example, there are craftspeople making exacting reproductions of originals, down to the identical placement of every plug and tack. Then there are others making their own interpretations based upon the original ideas and philosophy, but for today's needs. (Not everyone enjoys a boxy Gus Stickley settee, mind you!) The same is true in houses. There are people recreating original designs and others building new interpretations—such as some Arts & Crafts bungalow condos I saw recently.

I believe the Arts & Crafts is the only truly American style, and it will continue. Little else has this appeal. It has a philosophy, a foundation on which you can build and grow. Compare this to, say, Art Deco—nice to look at, but where is the underlying philosophy? The same place Art Deco is today: nowhere. I believe that, in time, the Arts & Crafts will be seen as the dominant design movement of the 20th century. One could say it's never stopped since 1900—just been interrupted by few world wars. If a revival lasts long enough, it's not really a revival.

Learn more about the Grove Park Inn Arts & Crafts Conference and Antique Show at [www.arts-craftsconference.com](http://www.arts-craftsconference.com).

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# Kitchens and their Cookers

*The rise of the range from an 18th century innovation to an essential appliance has helped define the look of kitchens in any era.*

BY GORDON BOCK

The kitchen of the 1907 Evans House in California is dominated by a 1926 Smoothtop gas range, promoted for its compact, cooking surface that "makes possible smaller kitchens." The two-tone color and oven heat regulators were other breakthroughs for the era.





COURTESY OF HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND



Stunningly advanced for 1807, the centerpiece of the Rundlet-May House kitchen in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is a Rumford range—a brick firebox with iron top (now gone) and registers to control heat. Note the eponymous Rumford Roaster aside the hearth.

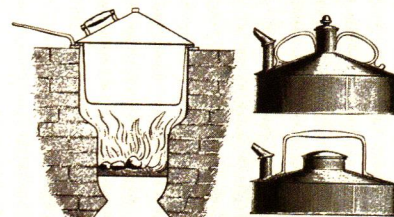
Were there kitchens before there were cookstoves? Technically, yes, because the ancient art of food preparation took place in open hearths well before the birth of the stove in the late 18th century. Any place there was roasting or baking was, in effect, a kitchen, regardless of whether it was a multiuse room like the post-medieval hall, a dedicated wing, or even a totally separate building like a summer kitchen.

Nonetheless, the kitchen as we know it today has been the heart of the modern house for nearly 150 years, and all through this time the heart of the modern kitchen has been the cookstove or range. In old-house kitchens, ranges are central not only to their function but to their historical ambiance as well. In fact, one way to understand kitchens of the past, and gain design ideas for an old-house kitchen today, is to examine the development of this remarkable appliance through its changing fuels, construction, and design.

## Early Stoves Light Up

From a cooking perspective, the ingredients of the modern kitchen came together only about 200 years ago with

the first appearance of a true range—that is, a flat-topped heat source combined with an oven. Credit goes to Benjamin Thompson, better known as Count Rumford, who designed the earliest such cooking devices to scientifically control heat as early as the 1790s. Rumford was an engineering pioneer who made the first scientific studies of heat transfer while perfecting methods for boring cannons. Better known today as the inventor of the Thermos Bottle and the fireplace that bears his name, Rumford's particular genius in the kitchen was to take the cooking fire out of the open hearth and put it in a box.



In Rumford's stewing range, the brick enclosure had a separate firebox for each boiler, to make cooking small meals more efficient. Specially designed pots and pans maximized heat transfer and look uncannily contemporary today.

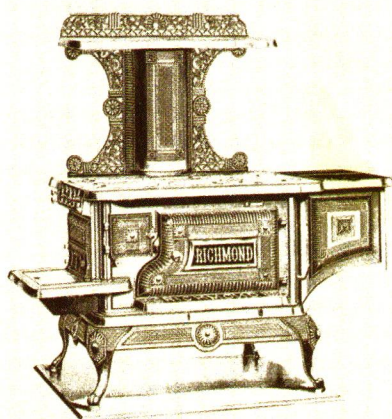
ALL ILLUSTRATIONS: NATIONAL ARCHIVES ASSOCIATES





Castle Tucker in Wiscasset, Maine, is an 1807 museum house preserved to show its appearance in the late 19th century, when even an upscale kitchen was little more than a wood-burning cookstove garnished by a few sticks of functional furniture.

COURTESY OF HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND



Whether wood- or coal-burning, the cast-iron ranges of the latter 19th century were stocky and heavy, but leavened by ornamental nickel brightwork and raised filigree until the gas era.

A kitchen equipped according to Rumford's ideas was dominated by a large range built of brick masonry. Though sometimes connected to the chimney mass, such ranges might also be given their own space. The breakthrough idea was a flat top perforated by round ports of different sizes that opened to the fire below, into which the cook would lower Rumford-designed pots and pans, similar to the operation of some institutional ranges of today. Cast iron seems to have appeared in later versions for tops and firebox doors, and the same kitchen might also include another Rumford innovation: an iron drum with a door that was built into the hearth masonry and called the Rumford Roaster.

The growth of American coal and iron mining in the 1820s made cast iron the wonder material of the 19th century and led to a prolific industry in making stoves for cooking as well as heating. Cast

iron could take the repeated temperature swings of hot and cold, and it was an ideal medium for casting into complex, prefabricated parts, as well as for decorative surface ornament. Early metal stoves imported in large numbers from Holland and England came in a variety of boxy designs, but by the 1840s a number of basic stove types—used for laundry, heating, and cooking—had been worked out and were being manufactured widely in America.

Whatever their use, early stoves were designed to burn wood, but after the Civil War, coal-burning designs came on the scene. While stoves made for cooking as well as heating might be retrofitted to exhaust out an existing hearth and flue, in the best situations they were connected by an umbilical metal stove pipe to a new kind of chimney that was smaller in flue diameter to enhance the draw for the stove. In pre-1830s houses, where there



might be only a large central chimney and open cooking hearth, whole new kitchen ellis were often built just to accommodate the radically different range.

## The Promise of New Fuels

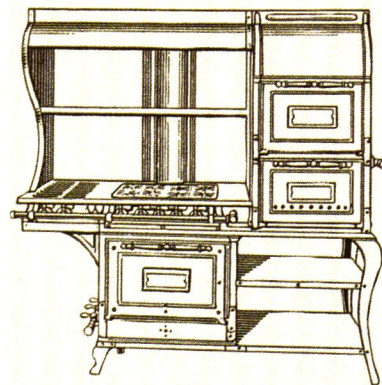
As the Age of Invention waxed in the 1880s and '90s, stove manufacturers began a search for heat sources beyond wood and coal, and an unlikely combination of forces led them to gas. Always pioneers in the use of gas, English inventors had been experimenting with cooking by gas as early as the 1830s, but it took the maturing of the gas lighting industry to extend the notion to cooking in America. In the 19th century, gas was made from bituminous coal and was primarily an illuminant used to power street and indoor lights. Though gas cooking had found a place in England by the 1860s, and range manufacturers were beginning to ship their product overseas, in America gas was considered too expensive a fuel to be burned for cooking (not to mention the source of an aftertaste in some minds).

After 1900, though, gas companies were seeing electric power companies nibble away at their bread-and-butter business—lighting—so they turned to the kitchen as the source of a new market. Since gas ranges had no need for the heavy, cast iron box of a wood- or coal-burning range, they could be built in much lighter and more compact forms. Plus gas ranges gave off much less excess heat and had no need for a chimney, making them ideal for the new, smaller kitchens of houses like bungalows. What's more, they were light enough to stand on tall, slender legs to become, along with sinks, one of several pieces of freestanding "furniture" in the early modern kitchen.

By the 1910s the design of a gas cookstove had arrived at the iconic look of the "cabinet range"—a burner top at left or right of a baking oven with a broiler below. Ranges were usually constructed of sheet metal and cast iron with a baked enamel finish. Gas fed the burners through an exposed manifold running across the front that was controlled by wheel handle valves or utilitarian cocks. By the Roaring Twenties, the cabinet range hit its stride

as a five-burner, two-oven appliance. A popular sales hook was porcelain enameling of all surfaces in black, white, or grey, but the big breakthrough was the invention of reliable heat regulators for controlled oven temperatures.

Gas was not the only fuel innovation, however. The vapor stove, common by the 1890s, capitalized on the new availability of petroleum products in areas where piped-in gas was not available. Also made of iron and sheet steel, these stoves were light and portable with a styling not unlike the treadle sewing machines of the day. In the 1910s and '20s, the combination range became quite the rage. These cookers were fired by gas as well as wood or coal, and offered seasonal versatility: coal or wood for added winter warmth, or just gas for cooking in summer heat. In



**The reign of the cabinet range was fed by the ability of gas to fuel a smorgasbord of ovens in the same appliance. Ovens could now be placed above and below the burners, and at either side.**



**One of the iconic images of the 1920s kitchen is the special gas cabinet range, with its distinctive barrel-door warming oven on top. Designed for constant use by large families or boarding houses, these ranges combined three or more broiling and baking ovens with multiple burners.**

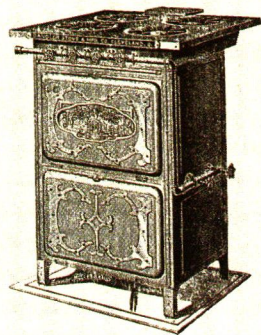
DOUGLAS KEISTER PHOTO





DENNIS MCWATERS PHOTO

Two ranges are the main course of the 1910-1925 kitchen at Maymont in Richmond, Virginia. The hood over the coal-burner is evidence of how much heat these units produced; the early gas range (at left) needed neither the exhaust nor the floor space.



A name in the stove industry into the 1910s, the Dangler company made this early two-oven gas range in 1890 along with a line of vapor stoves that ran on carbureted gasoline.



COURTESY OF THE WOODROW WILSON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY, STAUNTON, VA.

Common for the mid-19th century, the kitchen at Woodrow Wilson's boyhood home in Staunton, Virginia, shows a cooking hearth updated with a cast-iron wood stove that vents to a large existing chimney.





The peak of kitchen taste in the 1930s was a range that looked like a sideboard, dresser, or cabinet—anything but an appliance. Short legs and burner covers helped complete the conceit.

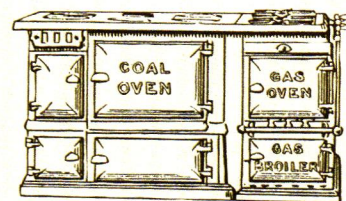
another tug of war, electric appliance manufacturers made their own leap into the cooker market with electric ranges. What started as a glorified electric hot plate around 1917 had gained new ground by 1930 as the electric ranges, looking much like the products of their gas competitors, fed the appetite of a nation pushing to wire for power.

## Sizzling in Many Styles

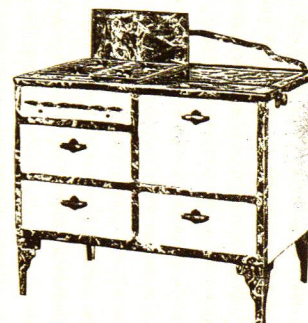
In the early 1930s, gas range manufacturers found a way to hide the gas manifold behind the sheet metal body, and cookers on spindly cabriole legs quickly assumed a new marketing persona as the “chest of drawers range.” Covers that pulled down over the burner left the appliance “hardly recognizable as a stove,” according to ads. In the tight times of the Depression, some manufacturers suggested their ranges might even double as tables. Drawer-type handles and decorative legs continued the notion that ranges were furniture—even

down to paint finishes that aped materials like marble or wood.

By the end of the decade, the “built-in” look had arrived, and gas and electric ranges alike suddenly stopped trying to masquerade as freestanding cabinets. The winds of streamline design were blowing through the kitchen, so ranges grew dashboardlike backs that hugged the wall and square-cut corners that fit flush with countertops at either side. Legs became greatly reduced or disappeared altogether. Inspired by the new aerodynamic contours of planes, cars, and trains, designers were adding airfoil curves and chrome speed lines to the most stationary of kitchen appliances. The trend continued through the 1940s and into the post-war years, when ranges became blessed with as many timers, automatic controls, and gadgets as the new automobile-driven economy could connive—a fitting domestic food preparation station for the atomic-era lifestyle to come. 🏠

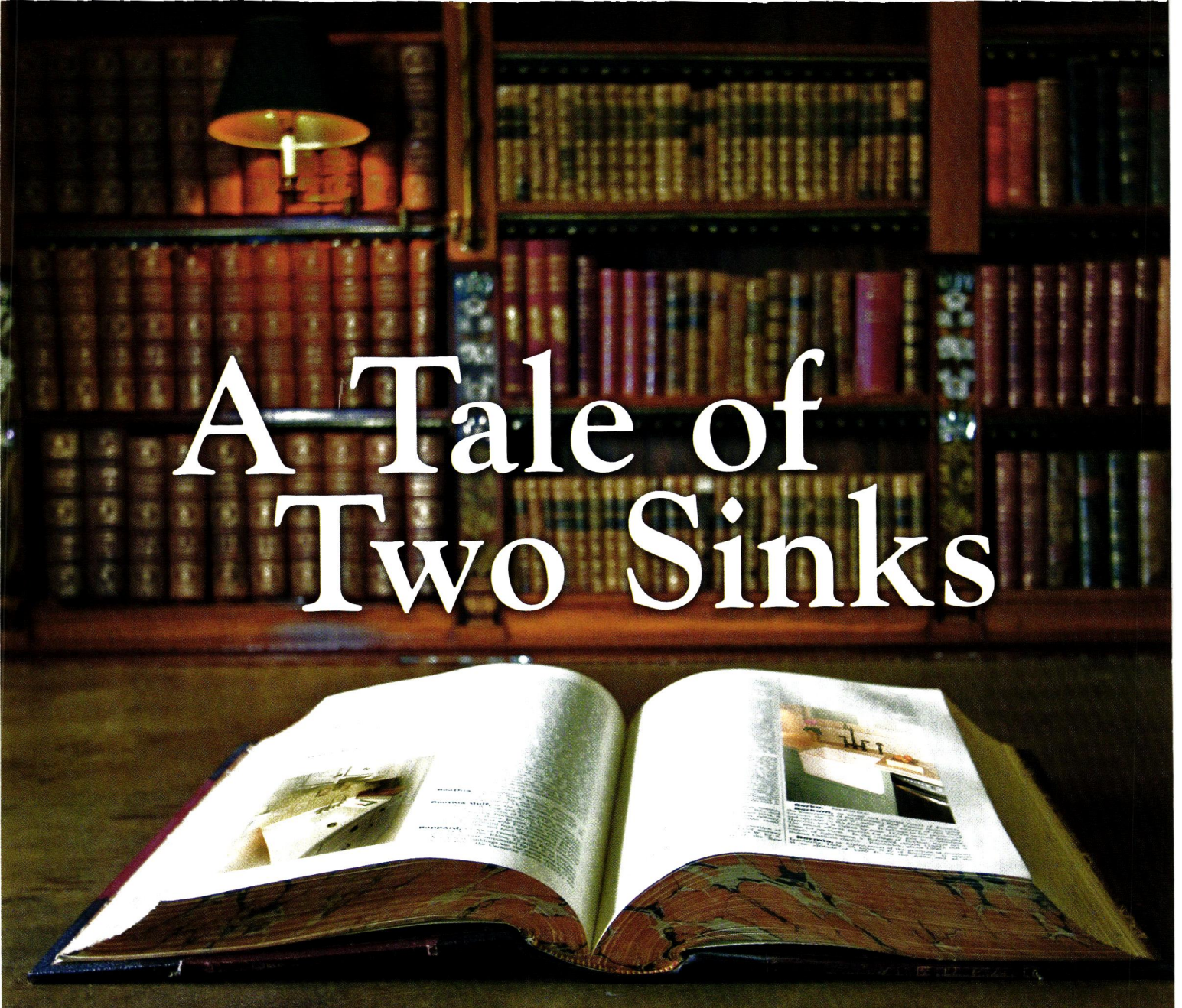


To help households make the transition from coal to gas, in the 1920s manufacturers offered combination ranges that ran on either fuel—gas in summer, coal for added warmth in winter.



Once manufacturers had hidden the gas manifold, ranges could masquerade as furnishings, such as this “chest of drawers range” with marbleized trimwork.





# A Tale of Two Sinks

**The right sink for your old-house kitchen can take many forms. Here's a look at how two old-house owners tackled the sink dilemma.**

BY LYNN ELLIOTT AND DEMETRA APOSPOROS

**T**oday's kitchen restorations involve hundreds of decisions. Take for example that prosaic workhorse, the kitchen sink. While as recently as two decades ago it was difficult to find new sinks with historic appeal, modern-day offerings are plentiful—from slate apron-fronted farmhouse sinks, to stainless steel sinks with integrated drain-

boards, to everything in between. And let's not forget the option of using an original antique, too. So how do you decide between the many options out there? OHJ checked in with two readers—one of them a former editor on staff—to find out how they selected sinks for their kitchen rehabilitations, and the specific challenges they faced in getting them installed.





LYNN ELLIOTT PHOTOS

## Lynn Elliott and Todd Nigh's New Apron Front

WHEN MY HUSBAND, TODD, AND I bought our 1900 Victorian-era duplex in Staten Island, New York, the original cast iron farmhouse sink was still in the kitchen. The double-bowl, apron-front sink had a removable drainboard inside one basin, and at 4' wide and 2' deep, was large enough to be a horse trough. Nonetheless we intended to keep it, as it was the only redeeming feature in a dismal kitchen. We had planned to remodel our kitchen around the sink, but soon discovered that it was irretrievably damaged on one side—the inset cast iron drainboard had chipped away the enamel beneath it, resulting in a corroded mess. Now we had to rethink the sink. Since we had already mapped out a straightforward farmhouse style for our kitchen, with plain, flat-panel cabinets and rustic stone tile counters that complemented the rest of our simple but nicely detailed turn-of-the-century house, putting in a new farmhouse sink was a natural fit, as well as a nod to what had already

been there. What we didn't know was how challenging it would be to install such a sink ourselves—but we were about to find out.

I began researching apron-front sinks and discovered that there are many options for farmhouse sinks—including stainless steel, cast iron, copper, and fireclay. There are also two types: false farmhouse sinks (usually made of stainless steel) that create the apron effect with a separate piece, and actual apron-front sinks that require precise measuring to fit within cabinetry. The first type is easier to install, but clearly not as authentic. The latter type, the kind we selected, presents some installation challenges.

We chose a Shaw's fireclay sink in a style that has been handmade in the U.K. since 1897, slightly before our house was built. Although smaller than our original sink, it has the same color and height, and it echoes the original with its deep, wide basin and rounded edges. Like all farm-

**The weight of the new farmhouse-style sink—some 140 pounds—meant extra support needed to be built into the underside of the cabinet.**

house sinks, it juts out about an inch or so beyond the cabinetry. But there are differences, too. The new sink doesn't have a built-in backsplash, and it has a single basin. (There was a double available, but we preferred the single.) We did search for a new sink with built-in backsplash, but never found one. (The best resource for that type would probably be salvage.)

Because fireclay farmhouse sinks are handmade, no two sinks are exactly the same size or shape (dimensions vary plus or minus 2 percent), so the manufacturer doesn't provide a template. Measurements vary with other types of farmhouse sinks, too, so manufacturers recommend ordering custom-made cabinets. Ideally, the sink should be ordered first, then the cabinet can be built to fit. We were using semi-custom cabinets for our kitchen, and there was no option for a farmhouse sink, so we needed to figure out a way to support the cabinet and cut its front to fit the sink on our own.

We'd seen two types of installations for farmhouse sinks on the Internet and in retail demo kitchens. One had the sink fitting tightly into the facing of the cabinet and sealed with clear silicone caulk; the other had three 2"-wide strips of wood (matching the cabinet) framing the sink.



**When the cabinet doors are opened, the support beams are barely visible.**



We chose to try to fit our farmhouse sink into the cabinet without a frame because we liked the cleaner look, knowing that, should anything go wrong, the simple frame could be our backup plan.

Our main concern was bracing the cabinet to support the 140-pound sink without collapsing. A U-shaped frame—effectively a three-sided ledge—supported a sink we saw on display at a tile store, where they were

nice enough to let us take reference photos. For our farmhouse sink, we decided to brace the cabinet completely, front-to-back and side-to-side. Placing braces along the depth and the width of the cabinet doesn't interfere with the drain, and unlike a U-shaped ledge, also provides support for the front of the face frame. Our second priority was cutting the cabinet front to fit the sink cleanly, with no gaps. Below are details on how we

did the work. In the end, our efforts turned out pretty well—the fit is close enough that we don't feel the need to frame in the sink, and our kitchen has a farmhouse-in-the-city feel that complements our house.

*Lynn Elliott, a former OHJ editor, works for Random House Children's Books and has published articles and books about home restoration.*

## Installing a Farmhouse Sink

You'll need a jigsaw and a belt sander. For the materials, have enough 2x4s on hand to make four braces in the cabinet, as well as fine-threaded drywall screws, shims, cardboard, duct and painter's tape, and clear silicone caulking.

### 1 MEASURING FOR BRACES

First, establish the dimensions of the sink and the cabinet. Farmhouse sinks are under-mounted, sitting beneath the countertop, so determine the depth of your countertop material, too, including any grout. The placement of the main braces, running along the cabinet's width, will be above the second set of braces, running along the depth.

Add the depth of your sink to the depth of your countertop material. We also added an extra 1/8" to this measurement to give us space to adjust the sink to the tile countertop. (After the tile was laid, we shimmed the sink and caulked between the two.) Measure down from the height of the countertop, and mark off the depth of the sink inside the cabinet. The two sets of braces will be attached below this line, so check for any clearance issues. Will the braces be visible when the cabinet doors are open? Adjust accordingly. We initially planned to install the braces with their 2" side up, but realized we would have seen them when the cabinet doors were opened, so instead we laid them flat, using the 4" side to support the sink.

Support bars sit one atop the other, and are connected at the corners with 3" screws for extra strength.



Shims added between the top brace and the sink's bottom help level out the sink.



Measure the inner diameter of the cabinet for both the width and the depth, then cut two sets of 2x4s—two to run front to back, two to run side to side, using the depth and width measurements.

### 2 ATTACHING THE BRACES

Using fine-threaded drywall screws 2 1/2" long,

attach both width braces below your measurement mark. We drilled through the adjoining cabinets on either side. Next, attach the other pair of 2x4s along the depth of the cabinet, tightly below other braces. These 2x4s will form a "bridge" and add extra support. Then, use 3" drywall screws to connect the two sets of braces at their corners, from the top down.

### 3 CREATING A TEMPLATE

The rounded corners of a farmhouse sink make it tricky to fit tightly into the cabinet, and the weight of the sink can make it difficult to maneuver for tracing a template. You'll need at least one other person to help you.

To begin, find the center of the cabinet's width and mark it with a pencil. Determine the sink's width, and center it on that mark. For the template, duct tape two pieces of cardboard together. Rest the front of the sink on the cardboard and scribe a line with a pencil. Remove the sink and cut out the template. The template will be a bit bigger than the actual sink, so check the template against the sink's front, making any necessary adjustments. Pay particular attention to the curved bottom.

When you have made the final adjustments to the template, position the template on the cabinet using the center mark you made. Using painter's tape, mask off the area on the cabinet, then remove the template. (Painter's tape marks off the position and helps prevent the cabinet's veneer from splitting.)



### 4 MAKING THE CUT

Check your measurements and the positioning again, and make any adjustments. Using the jigsaw with a fine wood blade, cut the facing slightly inside the marked-off area, especially at the corners—this will give you room to adjust the fit.

Check the fit of the sink in the opening, using a belt sander to smooth down areas that are too tight. Once the opening is set, position the sink. After countertops are installed, make any additional adjustments (to level the sink), then seal between the sink, the cabinet, and the countertop with clear silicone caulking.



The salvaged sink is a perfect complement to custom cabinetry—in a range of sizes and depths—that the Lazets modeled on built-ins in the house's original, untouched pantry.

J.D. SMALL STUDIOS PHOTOS

## Laura and John Lazet's Salvage Solution

LAURA AND JOHN LAZET had already repaired decades' worth of remuddles to their mid-1800s farmhouse in Mason, Michigan, (see "A Remuddling Reborn," OHJ Dec '06) by the time they decided to tackle the kitchen. They knew they would keep the room's design aligned with the rest of the house. They were also fortunate enough to have found a sketch of the kitchen's early layout and have a few original, untouched pantry doors on which to model the cabinets. But when it came to the sink, they realized they could go a couple of different ways. They could select a sink from the mid-1800s, the house's early timeframe, or one dating to the year they had documented the installation of indoor plumbing on the house, which was 1948. For Laura, it was a no-brainer: "When I

was a kid, we had a summer place with a double drainboard sink," she says, "and I always wanted one just like it."

Laura was determined to find the perfect circa-1950 sink at salvage, so she started looking for one online. When purchasing salvage items, it helps to know exactly what you want; Laura did. "I wanted a large double drainboard sink with one big basin," she says, "and it had to be in good condition." It also needed to be deep, so water wouldn't readily splash out—a lesson the Lazets learned the hard way after installing an antique, wall-mounted sink in their laundry room that was saved from a farmhouse being demolished across the road.

After about six months of searching, Laura located the perfect sink: a 1951 cast



iron double drainboard beauty that's 54" long, with an 8"-deep basin. Stamped into its metal bottom is the following information: American Standard Radiator Sanitary Corporation, Baltimore, 8-20-1951. The sink was freight-shipped from an East Coast





**A double drainboard and a deep basin were Laura's main priorities, along with a sink in good condition. The Lazets' sink is in such good shape that people think it has been refinshed—it hasn't.**

soap and hard water dispensers (hard water for drinking, since they have a well) in a brushed nickel finish that Laura found the least obtrusive. They did have to do some tinkering beneath the sink on plumbing that had been remuddled years ago.

"The plumbing had all been jury-rigged," explains John. "Electrical tape, duct tape, glue, and just plain old friction from sticking pipes into each other had been used to tie the old system together. The old owners had also relied on calcium deposits from leaking water to seal up any cracks. For years, every time I'd touch a joint, the calcium deposits would break and a new leak would begin." John has spent the last 17 years replacing and upgrading the plumbing, and running new copper pipes from the well to the sink. Because the sink is located 25 feet from the water heater, last year he built a new extension for the recirculating hot water line so they could get hot water faster. The last plumbing detail John needed for the new sink was a better vent. "The existing plumbing was vented 20 feet away," he explains, "so we installed a special P-trap air vent under the sink."

The finished kitchen seamlessly melds old and new, and feels as though it has always been there. Other elements completing the kitchen's antique feel include wooden countertops, which were custom milled from cherry trees on the property, and a built-in hutch Laura designed to replace one that had been removed decades ago.

In one spot in the kitchen, you can get a beeline view into the original pantry, catching a glimpse of new cabinets along the way. Not only do the cabinets in both rooms match perfectly, but Laura was even able to find reproduction drawer pulls that exactly resemble the century-old originals. Laura and John are pleased with the efforts of everyone that helped them rehabilitate their kitchen. "Finally," says Laura, "I have the kitchen I've been dreaming about for the past 21 years." 🏠



**The plumbing includes two air traps (above, left) to prevent water hammering and a separate supply line (above, right) for the hard water tap.**

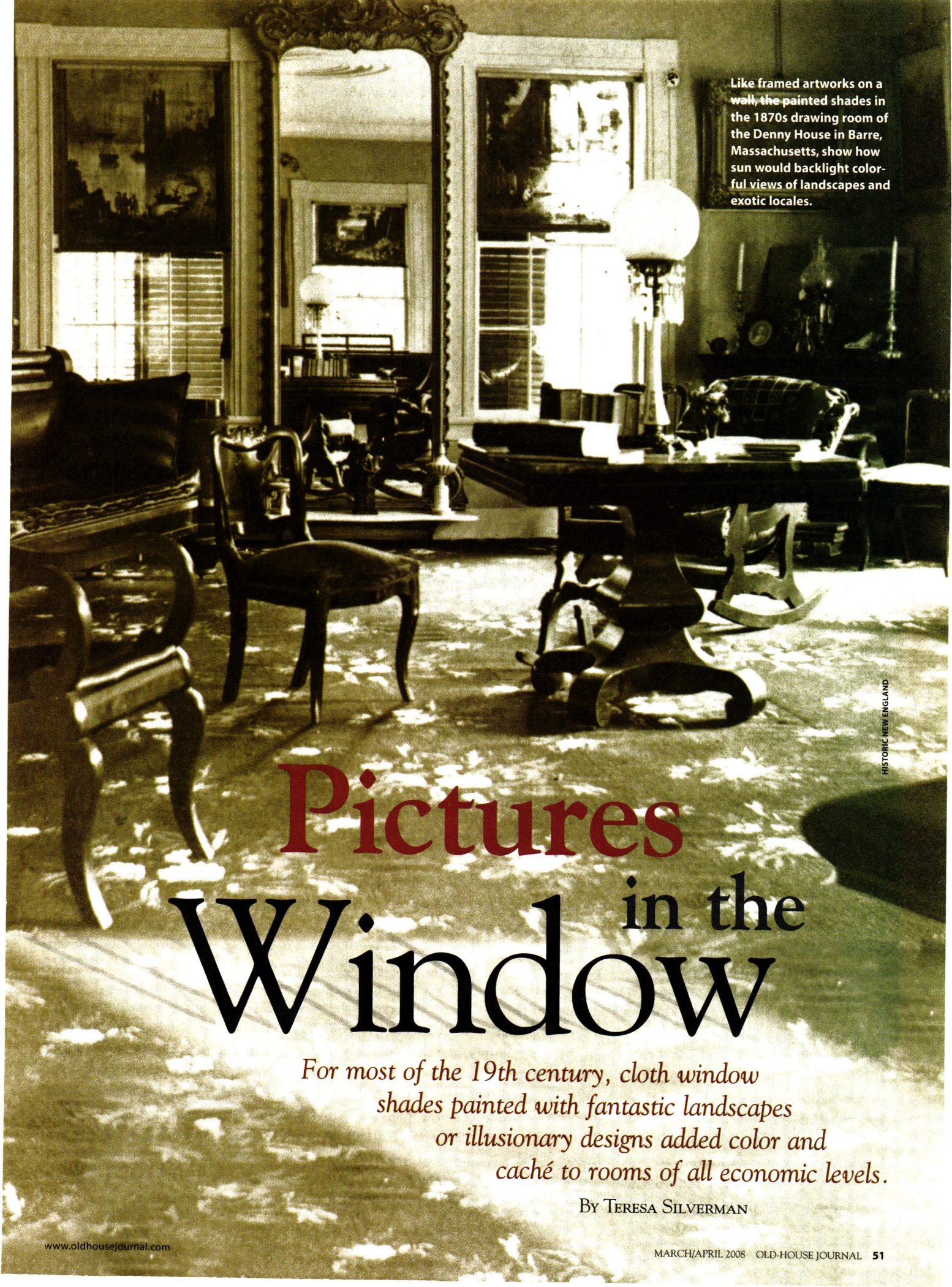
salvage yard to the Lazets' house, then Laura and John set to the task of designing a wall of cabinets to accommodate it, which proved a little challenging. "Like most old floors, ours are uneven," says Laura. "The floor drops 1¼ inches over the length of the sink." In order for the sink to sit level, local craftspeople at Wilson Restoration, who did all of the custom woodwork for the Lazets, created cabinets for the sink with hutch-style footings taller on one side than the other to minimize the sloping floor, then set the cabinets with shims. After the cabinets were installed, finish trim placed along

the base also helped hide the tilt of the floor. In addition, the sink's heft—which at some 200 pounds, weighs more than a countertop—required that the cabinet be fortified. All four sides of the cabinet were built with ¾" plywood, then a hidden support rail—also of ¾" plywood—was added between the cabinet doors. The cabinet's sides were also made out of two pieces of wood.

Another challenge came when John tried to install the sink and found the original drain so firmly attached that it was impossible to remove. "I spent at least two days soaking it in penetrating oil and gently tapping the retaining ring," he says, "but it wouldn't budge." Next, he carefully applied heat and tried tapping the ring again, still it wouldn't move. "Finally, I had to cut it off with a recip saw," John says, explaining that he was careful not to damage the threads so the rest of the ring would unscrew. When John went to install the new drain, he got another surprise; the new one Laura had purchased wasn't deep enough, and they had to find another.

Because the sink was manufactured with four holes to accommodate faucet hardware—it originally featured a faucet, separate hot and cold knobs, and probably an early sprayer mechanism—the Lazets could get creative with their new hardware installations. In the end, they chose to install a mixer, faucet, and individual





Like framed artworks on a wall, the painted shades in the 1870s drawing room of the Denny House in Barre, Massachusetts, show how sun would backlight colorful views of landscapes and exotic locales.

# Pictures in the Window

*For most of the 19th century, cloth window shades painted with fantastic landscapes or illusionary designs added color and caché to rooms of all economic levels.*

By TERESA SILVERMAN

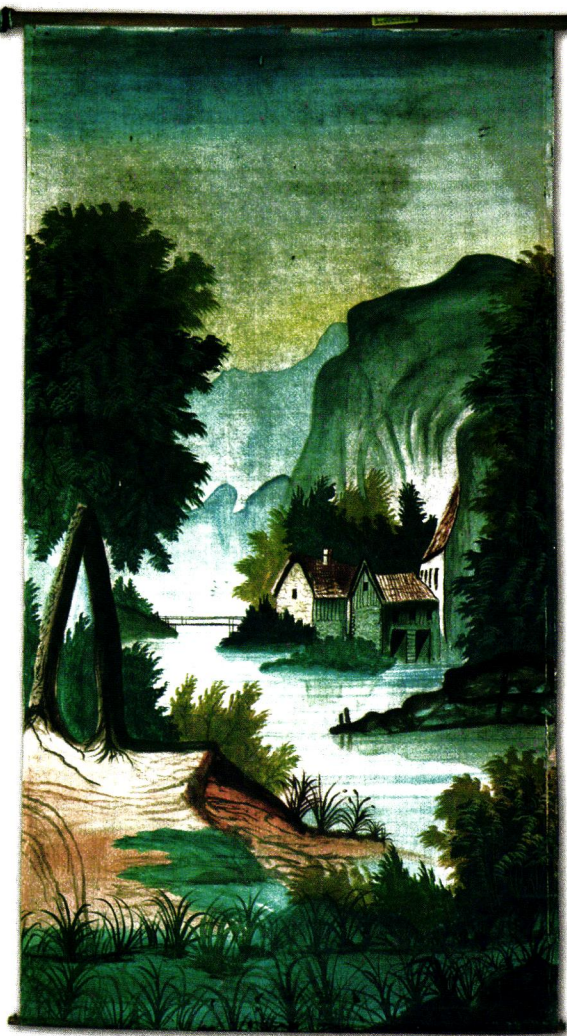


Today when we stand in a room filled with beautiful furnishings, we usually see windows as blank spaces—empty expanses of clear glass or, at best, a stretch of window shade in some neutral, unadorned color. In the 19th century, though, the experience was totally different. Alongside painted artworks hanging on walls, windows stood out as frames for dramatic landscapes, architectural elements, or exotic scenery vividly projecting from cloth roller shades. In daytime, sunshine would backlight these scenes so that they stood out in high definition, making them visually more arresting than anything in the room. At night the effect was reversed, as artificial light illuminated these spectacular pictures for the pleasure of passers-by outdoors.

What is so intriguing about painted shades is how a decorative art form once widely popular is almost totally forgotten today. To help bring these furnishings out of the shadows and, perhaps, pique the interest of old-house owners who'd like to revive them, here is a brief look at the history and artistry behind painted cloth shades.

## The Art of Painted Shades

Translucent cloth window shades most likely emerged from ornamental painting techniques developed in the early 18th century for stage backdrops in theatrical productions. Here, images of buildings, landscapes, and mythical places were painted on sheer fabric that was illuminated from behind. Among the first evidence of painted shades in America is an 1792 advertisement for "transparent Blinds and Windows" by Hugh Barkely and Patrick O'Meara of Baltimore. By the 1820s and 1830s pictorial sheer shades were common in affluent homes because they met the need for airy, light-filled interiors with decorative aplomb. For the first half of the 1800s, shades were hand-painted by individual artists, but rapid increase in popularity led to mass-production in workshops with as many as 150 artists, and



OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE

This scenic shade (1860-1875) shows how water, mountains, and trees made good subjects for scraping paint into translucent highlights.

screens and shades became so prevalent in America. Europe was rife with political unrest in the late 1840s, and these scenes may have been the work of German and French lithographers who emigrated to America in its wake.

What did translucent shades look like in a typical room? The collections of Historic New England in Boston include a variety of 1870s photographs that provide tempting glimpses of the effect. One of the best views shows two Queen Anne windows half covered with shades clearly painted with landscapes. Other photos give a peek at shades outlined in decorative frames or architectural motifs.

Even more revealing, the museum at Old Sturbridge Village in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, preserves dozens of actual cloth shades manufactured in the mid-19th century.

The designs range from landscapes with Oriental and Moorish themes to decorative border treatments.

Most scenes are printed on semi-opaque material but punctured with tiny pinholes. In

the evening, candlelight from within a room would shine through the pinholes to create a starlight pattern for someone viewing the window while on an evening's walk.

After scenic shades peaked in popularity in the 1860s, the dominant style became ornamental and architectural designs, such as filigrees and classically themed roundel patterns. Some shade manufacturers created make-believe windows on cloth using tromp l'oeil illustration techniques. Fanciful as this illusion sounds today, it's tame compared to the designs called "Blue Curtains" and "Green Curtains" produced by Sawyer, Ashton, and Company in 1850 that used paint to simulate elaborate drapery treatments attached to a window—right down to fringes, tassels, and tie-backs.

*"I had a transparent blind put up in my open window. There is a castle...and a castle-gateway and two walks, and several peasants and groves of trees which rise in excellent harmony with the fall of my green damask curtain."*

— Emily Dickinson, 1841

by 1850 they were being sold to average-income houses for as little as \$1.

During the first blossoming of painted shades in the middle of the 19th century, landscapes were the most common subjects, particularly idyllic, romantic scenes of Europe. This trend is consistent with the rise of the picturesque movement that began in the 18th century, and the tendency of Americans to follow European tastes. The fashion for scenic shades went part-and-parcel with the vogue for scenic wallpaper—in fact, many households simply attached pieces of scenic wallpaper to cloth to make decorative shades. Nonetheless, there could be another reason why European-themed



## Making Cloth Shades

According to 19th century references, the most commonly used material for cloth window shades was Holland fabric, defined as “a particularly strong linen, woven on purpose, the usual width of the window,” or “a coarse cotton fabric, woven plain, and furnished to imitate linen, for which it is usually sold.” Another choice apparently was cambric, a “thin, coarse, cotton fabric made in imitation of the Holland, and glazed upon both sides,” according to English references.

Whatever the specific material used, it had to be sized and then painted to become a decorative shade. First, the Holland was stretched on a frame. Next it was sized by applying a gluey material to fill the pores in the weave and prevent the fabric from absorbing the pigment. While the outlines of original designs could be sketched freehand, they were also transferred from another source by pricking the outline with minute pin holes and then rubbing charcoal through the holes. Stencils were used for stock patterns.

Then came the painting. In *Decorative Painting: A Practical Handbook on Painting and Etching Upon Various Objects and Materials for the Decoration of Our Homes*, author B.C. Seward describes in precise detail how to paint cloth to create a transparent effect using either water-based or oil-based paints. A modern day how-to guide would read something like this:

- Stretch cloth on a frame and then size it with warmed and diluted gilder's size at least twice to ensure that it is firm and tight enough to hold the paint.
- Smooth surface with pumice stone.
- Trace the outline of the decoration directly onto the canvas or use a stencil.
- Use a sponge to apply oil paint thinned with turpentine and let it nearly dry.
- When the paint reaches that point, use a palette knife to remove it so that “lights and half lights are formed.”

Seward recommends working at night with a lamp positioned behind the fabric and leaving “all white tints and highlights to be made by the unpainted surface.” He advocates using bright colors (such as reds, blues, yellows, and greens) and to obtain shades by stippling one color into another.

In *Decorative Painters and Glazier's Guide* (1827), Nathaniel Whittock offers advice

specifically on how to make transparent blinds. He recommends stretching cambric on a frame and sizing it with isinglass (an expensive fish gelatin) for small-scale paintings or boiled parchment for large paintings. Whittock recommends sticking to the most transparent pigments, such as Prussian blue, raw and burnt umber, and burnt sienna. He felt shades work best when the image has one or two bold objects that can be easily executed and the subject avoids too much foliage. He suggests scenes of storms by sea or land. Moonlight settings and other low-light or nighttime subjects, however, are not good because they block too much light.

Shades with trees were good for drawing rooms because they are seen close up, and the scraping technique creates nice highlights. While architectural themes suited libraries, long rooms, and galleries, Whittock felt they were too dark and heavy for a home.

## Will Painted Shades Return?

Historians cannot explain why decorative window shades faded in popularity, other than that the market became saturated and tastes changed. It's doubtful that cost was a factor, because, at their peak, they were very affordable. What is without question is the spell they could cast on a viewer, such as the poet Emily Dickinson, who described the view of the castle on her shades and the movement of her curtains. That the scene was not a veil to shield her from the outside world, but rather, a connection to what was

OLD STURBRIDGE VILLAGE



Possibly an 1850s Boston Putnam Shade, this scenic vignette rests in an elaborate frame designed to emulate mouldings and carvings.

beyond—both in reality and to what was in her imagination. Perhaps that connection between one's interior and exterior worlds can be captured again. 🏠

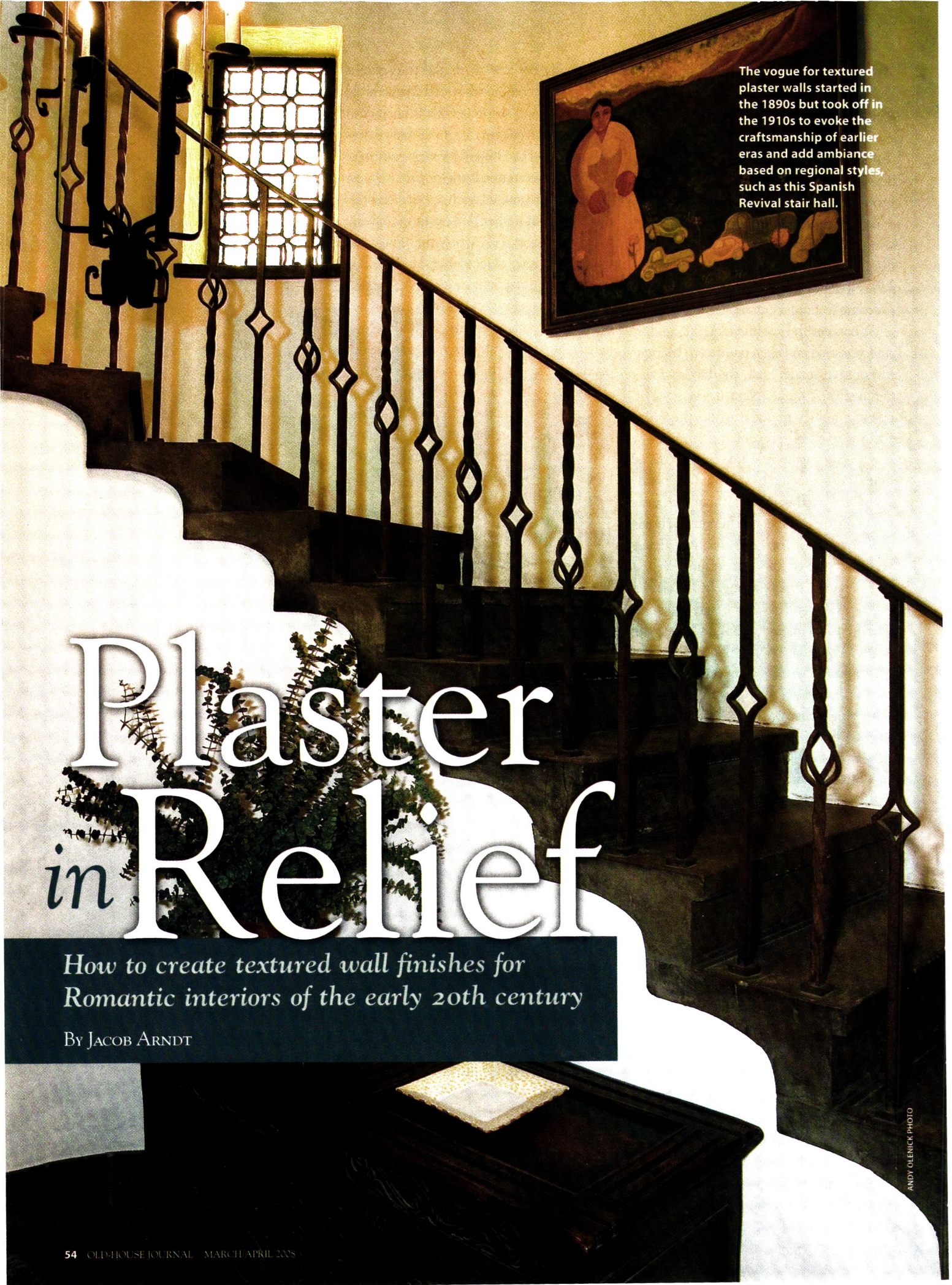
Teresa Silverman is a Boston-based communications specialist researching decorative arts at the Boston Center for Design.

To learn more about Old Sturbridge Village and its collection of early American objects, go to [www.osv.org](http://www.osv.org) and click on “collections.”

HISTORIC NEW ENGLAND

In urban areas, making painted window shades was a prolific business often allied with the wallpaper industry. Shades could be one-off designs by individual artists or mass-produced in factories.





The vogue for textured plaster walls started in the 1890s but took off in the 1910s to evoke the craftsmanship of earlier eras and add ambiance based on regional styles, such as this Spanish Revival stair hall.

# Plaster *in* Relief

*How to create textured wall finishes for Romantic interiors of the early 20th century*

By JACOB ARNDT

ANDY OLENICK PHOTO



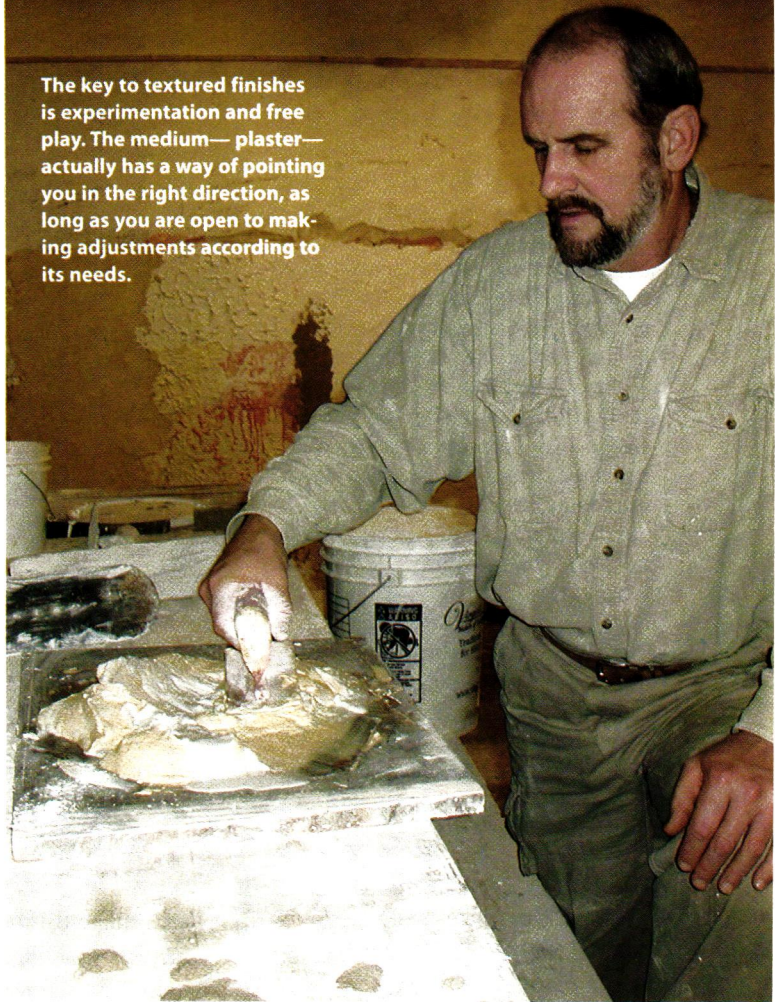
**R**eal plaster walls are so rare in modern construction it's easy to assume they can never be more than flat, neutral surfaces. However, once you see plasterwork of the past, you can appreciate what's possible with the free play of this timeless material. After studying an exhibition of Roman frescoes rescued from the volcanic ash of Mt. Vesuvius, I was impressed with how ancient artisans manipulated simple lime-and-sand mixtures to create vibrant textures and colors—fitting backdrops for their fine breads and rich cheeses. American artisans brought out the personality of plaster again in the early 20th century, creating beautiful forms and decorative effects with names like Italian Plaster, Roman Tile Finish, and Spanish Palm Finish for houses built in revival styles.

Learning how to reproduce plaster textures of the 1920s and '30s for repairs or additions to old houses can be a rewarding experience when you employ the appropriate materials. Though many of the original, handed-down trade formulas and practices are lost, the key—simplicity—is right at hand, especially if you're attempting to duplicate traditional work with modern materials. Take the confusion out of common repairs, and begin your plaster project with lime and sand. Not only are the plaster recipes for these materials essentially unchanged over the decades, they are compatible with historic construction practices without relying on additives such as acrylics, accelerators, retarders, and binders. Once you learn how to control moisture loss to the base that's receiving the plaster, you can use your creativity and enjoy the effects that spring from the action of a trowel and a few common tools.

## Mixing Plaster

To the salespeople at a masonry supply house, a textured finish coat may mean a splattered application of drywall compound (or a mixture of acrylics made for a franchise ethnic restaurant), but this is definitely not what you seek for historic restoration or even new additions. So for the moment ignore the plethora of “plaster” products out there and note that the raw materials

The key to textured finishes is experimentation and free play. The medium—plaster—actually has a way of pointing you in the right direction, as long as you are open to making adjustments according to its needs.



for textured plaster can be boiled down to a mixture of water, sand and natural hydraulic lime (see “The Line on Lime”). The recipe I like to use is natural hydraulic lime mixed with sand in a ratio of 2½ to 1—that is, 2½ buckets of sand to 1 bucket of lime powder, or whatever volume you can use comfortably in a few hours. Begin with a flat surface, such as a sheet of plywood laid across sawhorses, and start with a small batch—say 7 ½ cups of sand to 3 cups of natural hydraulic lime mixed together dry.

## Applying Base Coat



- (1) To create a texture similar to the Spanish finish on the opposite page start by troweling lozenge projections onto a properly prepared base. (2) Load the trowel and press the plaster into the wall with a sliding action, then smooth out the sides and ends so you have a gradual irregularity. (3) Then dip a tampico brush in a bucket of water, shake it off once, and gently smooth out the relief, tying it into the base.



## The Line on Lime

Natural hydraulic lime is a mineral extracted from limestone in a manufacturing process that involves heating the calcium carbonate (lime) to drive off the CO<sub>2</sub> content. The remaining white powder is what is mixed with sand to produce mortars and plasters. Think of lime as stone that's turned to powder form for easy use in masonry, which then conveniently hardens back to stone after reintroducing water (the slaking process) and CO<sub>2</sub>, which the lime absorbs from the atmosphere after it is applied as plaster.

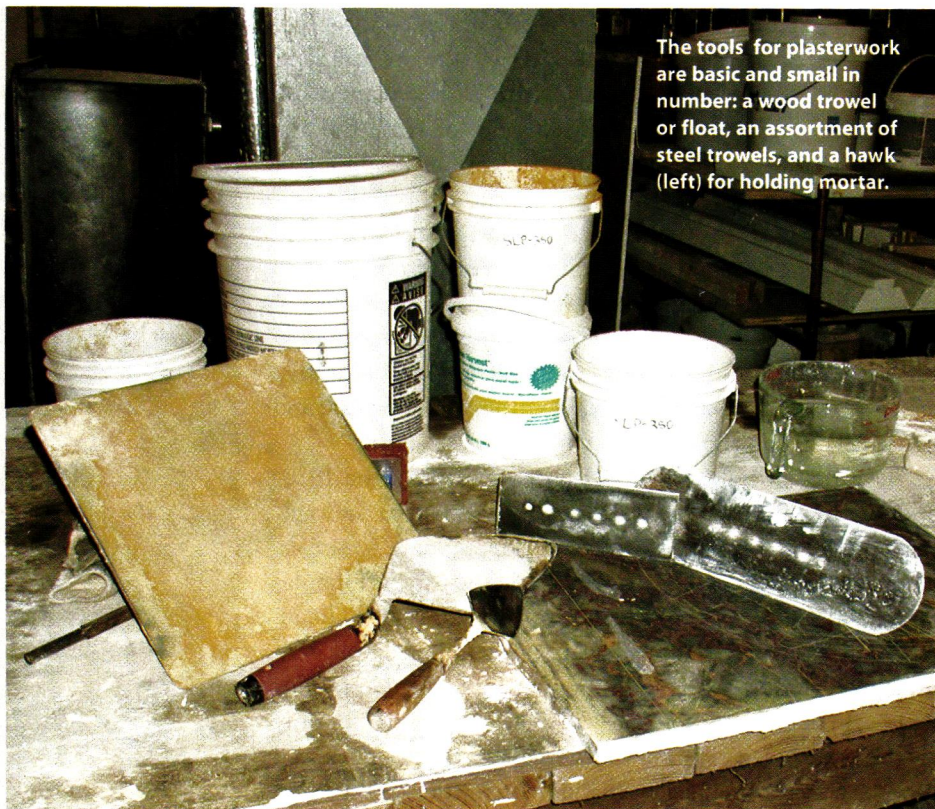
The finer points of using lime putty (lime slaked in water) or the powdered form that comes in sacks like cement, are basically a non-issue for restoration plasterwork and masonry repointing, as it is all calcium carbonate that will harden.

The bottom line is, the powder or dry form is much easier and less expensive to use. It is available here in the U.S., but since our masonry supply yards for the most part offer what is called mason's lime (that, for some reason, is manufactured so that it is necessary to add Portland Cement before it will harden), natural hydraulic lime is difficult to buy locally.

Contact **Great Lakes Limeworks**, 527 Mulberry St. Lake Mills, WI 53551 or e-mail [stone6@charter.net](mailto:stone6@charter.net) to order bags of natural hydraulic lime. Explain the intended use, and they will send a sample. Lime paints and lime-fast pigments are also available.



**Pre-mixed hydraulic lime dry building mortar from Europe**



The tools for plasterwork are basic and small in number: a wood trowel or float, an assortment of steel trowels, and a hawk (left) for holding mortar.

Next, shape this mixture into a volcano cone, scoop a hole in the middle of the dry batch, and fill it with water, being careful to add just enough water to obtain the consistency of thick pancake batter. After slowly pulling the dry material up into the water and letting it soak for a few minutes, mix it together with a trowel and let it set for about fifteen minutes or so to fatten up and become thicker and fuller.

Meanwhile, turn to the portion of the wall that you are going to plaster, making sure it is clean of any grease or smooth paint, and wet it down thoroughly with a mason's brush or spray bottle. Notice how the wall absorbs the moisture. Wetting down is critical for adhesion because the water will transport the plaster into the base material so it becomes an integral part of it. (Old plaster walls, concrete block, soft brick, metal lath, and wood lath are all good bases for new lime plaster.) If the surface is painted, glazed tile or brick, or has insufficient suction, you cannot expect the plaster to bond. In this case, either chip the surface enough to produce a porous substrate or apply a plaster bonding agent. (Bonding agents are acrylic liquids sold in convenient quart cans or gallon jugs that you brush or roll

onto the wall prior to applying plaster.)

For thick coats of plaster over masonry substrates or lath (the situation for most repairs), begin by troweling the lime-and-sand mix onto the wood lath, metal lath, or moistened wall. Lay the plaster on about  $\frac{3}{8}$ " thick, then notice how it behaves when you apply a wooden trowel to it.

You will be able to rub the surface to flatten it without bringing water out, so you can form the plaster for rounded corners or around obstructions in the wall.

Always use a wood float to smooth and flatten the surface—not the steel trowel, which you should reserve for initial application and finishing operations. This is because if you over-trowel with a steel trowel while leveling or otherwise shaping the surface, excess water may migrate to the surface. This robs the plaster of the suction needed at the wall, and the new plaster will fall to the floor. If this happens, simply wait for the wall to dry somewhat and reapply the lime-and-sand mix.

## Finish Experiments

At this point, you're ready to start experimenting with textures. First, try broadcasting the plaster onto the wall with a



# Mixing Lime Putty



(1) To prepare the mix for the next application, place a trowel-full of lime putty on a board or slab of marble, form it into a caldera or doughnut, and fill it with clean water. (2) Next add gauging plaster or gypsum. (3) Mix well. This lime putty mix will set up in about 15 minutes, so only prepare small amounts at a time. This will allow you to properly apply the plaster, then double back with the trowel to smooth out the fins.

brush, covering it with an even splatter of fine or rough surface. Next, grab the steel trowel and compress the raised surfaces somewhat, while noticing how the time you wait until troweling affects the final texture.

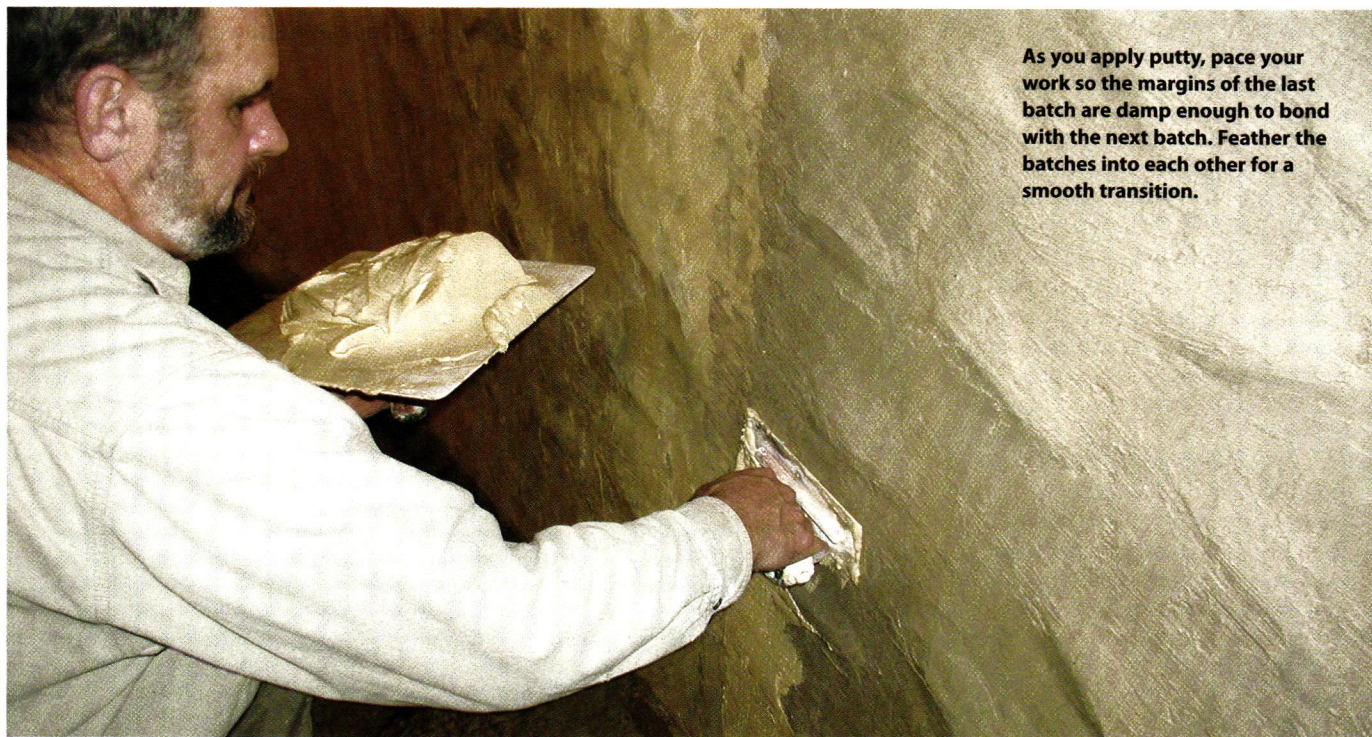
Alternatively, take up a brush and stipple the surface of the wet plaster wall to obtain a rough, natural look. Aside from color, texture is the most interesting way to vary flat, plain walls unbroken by pattern or light and shadow. Visit old movie theaters to see how the bold play of a plaster surface becomes more dramatic with

light, changing character with the different times of day and lighting sources. Mix up a rich batch of lime and sand—perhaps 1½ sand to 1 lime—and apply a thin, fresh coat, then pull the steel trowel directly back away from the surface, achieving a rough texture. Mixing a thicker batter will produce a larger texture, while thinning the batter produces a relief that naturally gets smaller.

Wait perhaps 30 minutes before you experiment with trowel and brush over the relief surface to achieve the desired pattern or texture.

Another way to achieve an interesting texture is to compress the plaster with the steel trowel while it's still relatively wet to make "fins" on the surface. Use a sweeping motion, holding the trowel slightly on edge over soft plaster. Then repeat the motion in regular arcs, either in short, choppy strokes or in long, arching ones.

You can obtain a very pleasing, soft surface texture by applying a dampened brush to fresh plaster. For this texture, begin by laying the lime-and-sand mortar thick and moist, then note how the brush creates different surface effects where the



**As you apply putty, pace your work so the margins of the last batch are damp enough to bond with the next batch. Feather the batches into each other for a smooth transition.**



# Applying Finish Coat



The finish coat of plaster is the stage where you even out the rough application and choose how much texture you want. (1) First, apply the lime putty mix over the projections, filling in the troughs or valleys to create the amount of projection you like. (2) Next, return for a second and third troweling to tighten up and condense the putty. (3) Last, brush on a mixture of lime pigment and lime powder if so desired.

## Saying No to Cracks

If shrinkage cracks begin appearing while experimenting with the thicker textures, then add some Keene's cement to your lime and sand mix. (Keene's cement is a gypsum-based product that helps harden the plaster before it has a chance to check or shrink.)

Remember, with thick textures you are not pressing down and condensing the material to check the shrinkage. Therefore it must be checked by speeding up the set (the Keene's cement approach) or, to some extent, by adding sand to the mix to slow down the loss of water.

White Portland cement, gypsum, and molding plaster are also used to hasten the set for a hard and durable surface by adding 10 percent to 30 percent to the lime-and-sand batch. There are also set-retarding agents that slow down the setting process some, but still give the plaster a hard set before shrinkage or checking problems can occur.

However, using these additives and combinations takes a little practice—for example, you will need to work faster if you add an accelerator. As a result, it is better to begin with just lime-and-sand mixtures until you attain a certain level of comfort with the materials.

Wall is wetter or dryer. Applied in the extreme, this kind of texture was used in old theaters after first pulling a thick batter, then playing over the resulting relief with a dampened brush. In my research, the only way to obtain those fat, mastic projections seems to be with traditional plaster.

A knocked-down finish resembling a pock-marked stone wall was popular in historic buildings, and has the advantage of being a surface that matures with age as the recessed parts darken.

You can achieve this kind of finish by first pulling your trowel from the wet surface to create the peaks. Then double

back with the wood or steel trowel to lightly flatten out the peaks fairly tightly, yet leaving voids more or less according to your preference.

For a texture that resembles stone pulled up from a bedding joint freshly out of a sedimentary quarry, first take a relatively wet mixture of finish lime and apply it thin over the wall. Next, pull the steel trowel out until you have a fairly regular field of projections that are sharper and much shallower than the heavier ones described above. As a general rule when pulling the trowel for texture, the thinner the coat or layer applied, the smaller and more numerous the projections will be.



Use a wood float or magnesium float to work a newly plastered surface flat and true. These tools won't bring water to the surface like a steel trowel, which can rob it from the interface of base and new plaster.



The dining room of this 1920s house in Chesterton, Indiana, is an example of a "pulled" texture where the plaster was first coaxed into projections by pulling the trowel off the wall, then smoothing them over to make a surface filled with interesting voids.

JOE HILLIARD PHOTO



It is a good idea to soften the sharp peaks somewhat with a wet paintbrush because the hardened surface, if left sharp, can actually be a hazard to anyone falling against these points. These textures give a pleasing play of shadow, even when the projections are very short and somewhat rounded and softened.

Next, experiment with a dampened tampico brush—the large yellowish clean-up brush used by masons and plasterers. For a stippled finish resembling bush-hammered stone, dip the brush in a thick batter of lime and silica sand and play it onto the wall. Work as though you are painting into hard-to-reach areas, slapping it on the surface a little while attempting to be fairly uniform in coverage. This stippled texture produces only soft, fine surface projections and is especially pleasing when used with a yellow ochre pigment. As always, when you are done with your texture and it has begun to set, cure your work by keeping it moist for some days after application. Then enjoy the ever-changing beauty of the walls you have created with some fine bread, rich cheese, and perhaps a fermented grape or two. 🍷

Longtime OHJ contributor Jacob Arndt is the principal of Northwestern Masonry & Stone (527 Mulberry St., Lake Mills, Wisconsin 53551).



Simple tools and techniques are responsible for a varied visual vocabulary of textured finishes, from gently undulating waves to surfaces sculptured like cake frosting.



CLOCKWISE: GAVAIL OGLESBAY; DEMETRA APOPOPOROS; JACOB ARNDT; ANDY OLENICK PHOTOS





# Floor Repair Pointers


**W**ood floors are so common and reliable in old houses, we tend to forget that even these faithful pieces of carpentry eventually get injured or worn in spots, and need a saw, hammer, and nails to set them right again. Here's a collection of tips, techniques, and advice that's worth remembering when you're fixing problems with wide-board floors or narrow strip tongue-and-groove floors.

By THE OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL TECHNICAL STAFF



## tip #1

When you're patching or adding on to an existing floor, matching the existing flooring is critical. Take care to duplicate the dimensions of the existing boards, remembering that the width and fit of the tongue-and-groove joints are most important. Salvage of one sort or another is a great option here. If you can't find matching boards at a salvage yard or by keeping your eye out for a likely dumpster, don't overlook the possibility of "swapping out" some flooring within your house. A closet on the second or third floor, for example, may have identical flooring to what you need for a repair on the first floor, and can be a donor area that no one except you will ever see.



Common old-house floors are (left to right) maple, pine, and oak.

**2** Starting with the same species of wood as the surrounding floor will do the most to match its appearance. For example, take particular care to note whether it is red oak or white oak, as well as whether you have a maple floor, or one made from one of the many pines. Then look for flooring with the same cut. Flat-cut (flat-grain) boards have annual growth rings that usually run parallel to the face of the board in a characteristic flame pattern. You will usually see this cut in softwoods like pine and in wide-board floors. Rift-cut boards (also broadly called quarter-sawn and vertical-grain) have annual rings that are vertical to the face of the board and are much more uniform in grain. This cut is more sophisticated than flat-grain, as well as more durable, and is commonly seen in strip floors in primary rooms.

Careful selection will help you go even further in matching appearance. Color variation and tightness of grain (number of annual rings per inch) play a part here. Also look to duplicate special figures in the grain, such as the flash of quarter-sawn oak or the little highlights of bird's-eye maple.

## tip #3

Unless there are special conditions, tongue-and-groove floors (especially strip hardwoods) should be laid and nailed up tight when they are installed. This is not only for good looks, but also for integrity, since loose-fitting tongues are one of the many sources of floor squeaks. When working with good materials in the open field of a floor, this is usually not difficult. However, when crooked floorboards turn up or space is cramped—say, when starting a floor—it becomes much harder to drive the boards up tight and nail them at the same time. Clamping the boards together is the solution to this dilemma, and one way is with a clever device cooked up years ago by the folks at the Oak Flooring Institute (an industry association). The tool (shown at right) is a lever made on the job from 2x4 scraps, a strap hinge, and a soda-can opener. Dimensions are all to taste, as is the type of hinge. In use, you dig the can opener into the subfloor at a position that leaves the lever somewhere short of being completely flat. Straightening out the lever as much as possible with either a foot or knee will squeeze the flooring together, leaving hands free to nail.

ALL PHOTOS BARBARA KRANKENHAUS EXCEPT WHERE NOTED

## 4

Whether freshly milled or recycled, make sure the new flooring has the same moisture content as the existing floor before you install it. If the new wood is too "wet," it could shrink, cup, or leave cracks in between boards when it dries. If the new wood is too dry, it could swell in width during the next wet season (typically the summer) and buckle, widening cracks between boards of the adjacent original flooring. (Cracks in new flooring will close, but because the new wood is tied into the old wood and expanding at a greater rate, cracks will open up in the old flooring.)

To head off these problems, match the moisture content of the repair stock to that of the existing flooring before installation. Measuring the wood with a moisture meter is one way. The most common method, however, is to allow the repair stock to adjust to the ambient moisture level of the room. To do this, stack and sticker the flooring—that is, separate it by layers of sticks—and leave it in the room where it will be installed for at least two weeks. Don't make the mistake of storing the repair stock in a garage, where it will pick up moisture.



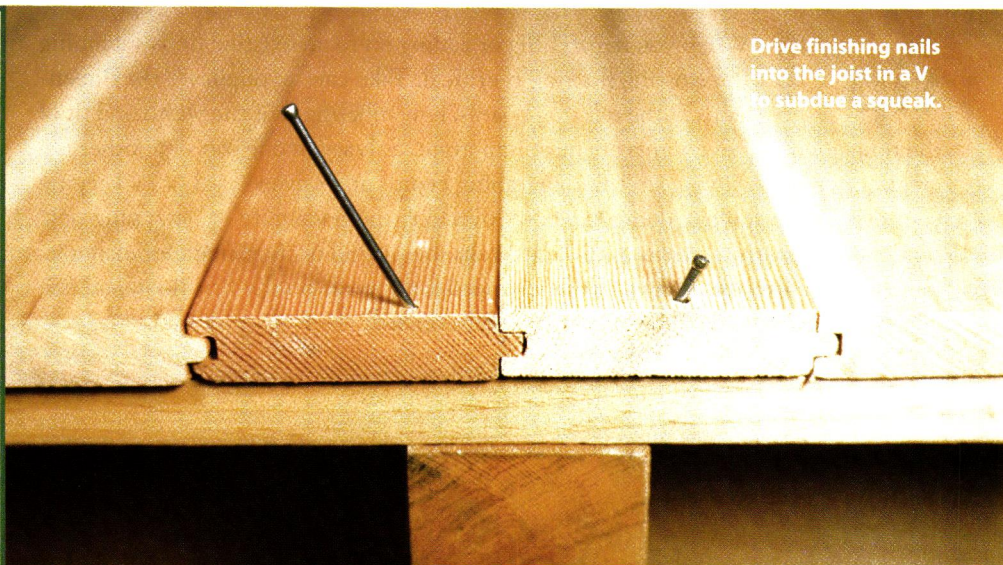
Common materials will make a tool to clamp flooring into nailing position.





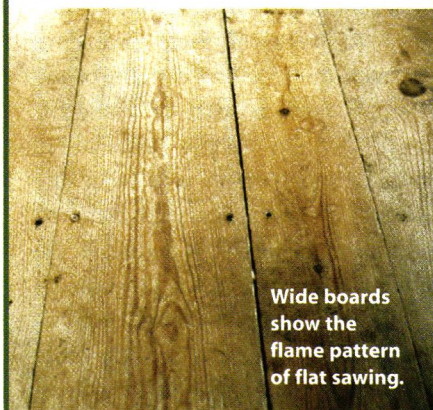
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Squeaks are sometimes caused by one or two subfloor boards that work against a joist because they are loose. When there is access from underneath, driving a shim dipped in glue between the joist and subfloor is often a fix. Stronger measures require anchoring the subfloor with a cleat. To do this, attach a block (roughly 2" by 2") to the joist in vicinity of the problem. Use wood screws, and make sure the block is flush with the top of the joist. Then have someone upstairs stand on the problem area while you screw the cleat to the subfloor from underneath.



Drive finishing nails into the joist in a V to subdue a squeak.

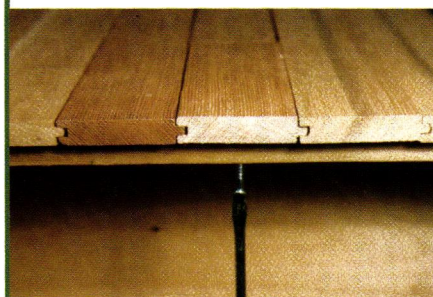
**7** If you are only able to work from the top, finished side of a floor, it is sometimes possible to halt a squeak by toenailing the floor to a joist. Starting at the "heart" of the squeak, drive a pair of 10d finishing nails towards each other in a V so that they grab the joist solidly. (Opposing nails resist pull-out.) Repeat every half-foot or so down the joist in both directions until the squeak is cured, then set the nails and fill the holes. If the squeak is minor or seasonal—say, just appearing in winter when the environment is drier—try lubricating the boards by dusting some talc in the joints. Repeat until the squeak improves.



Wide boards show the flame pattern of flat sawing.

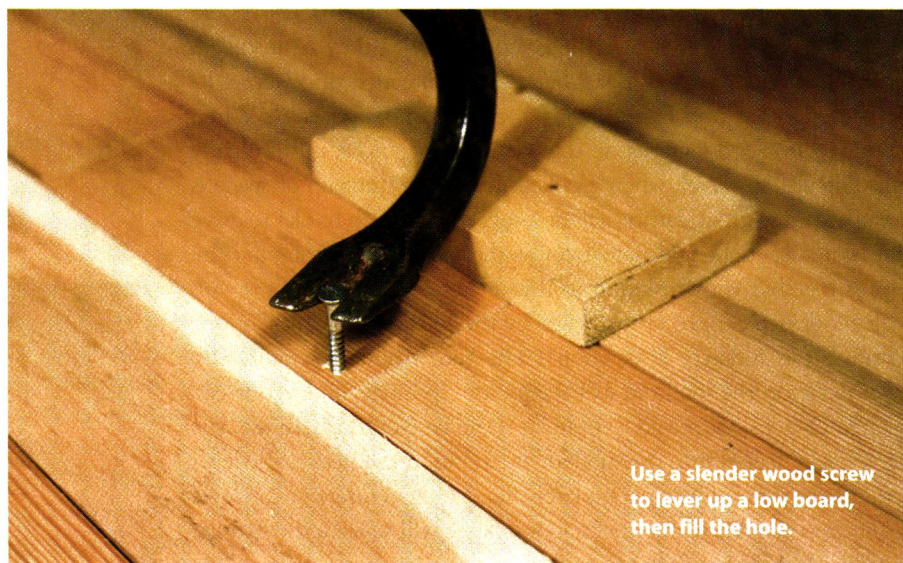
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If you have access to the underside of a squeaky floor from, say, a basement, first locate the problem area by watching the subfloor while someone walks on top. Since the noise is often the result of a low or loose subfloor board working against the finished floor, next try driving a short screw or two through the subfloor (shown below) to grab the finished flooring and prevent the two from moving against each other. Repeat until the squeak is gone.



**tip #8**

When single or multiple floor strips have sunken slightly due to a defect in the subfloor or joist, they can be pried up again using a wood screw. Turn the screw in as near as possible to the depressed area and just enough to grab well. Then place a wood block on a sound part of the floor as a fulcrum. Use a prybar to lift the boards back. Once the flooring is level, support it in place by driving one or more 8d (8-penny) finishing nails at an angle into the subfloor under the screw. Another approach is to inject epoxy consolidant or silicone sealant under the flooring if there is access above or below the fault.



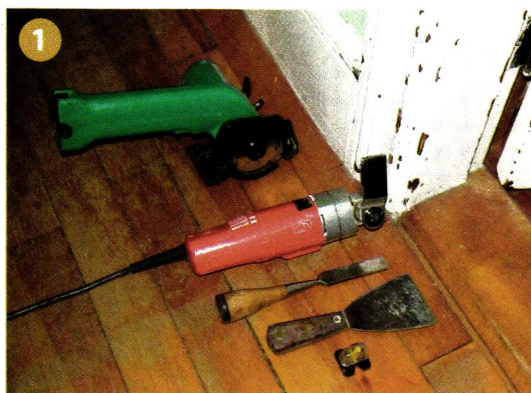
Use a slender wood screw to lever up a low board, then fill the hole.



# Floorboard Surgery

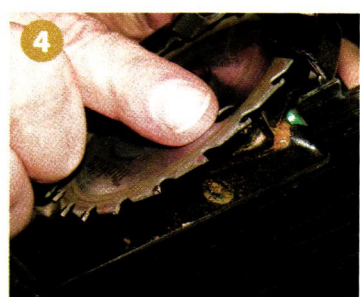
STEPS AND PHOTOS BY JOHN LEEKE

When it comes to working invisibly in floor repairs, special tools make the job slick, but not quick. It takes time to do careful work that does not damage the wood or finish on the floor. Plus, it's worth the effort in the beginning because there is little or no time to spend repairing or refinishing when putting the floor back together. With this approach the overall time and cost is much less than working with saws-alls and crowbars to rip the flooring up, then having to find or make replacement boards and finishing them to match.



**1** Suppose you have an electrical wiring project that requires opening up the floor for access to the space beneath and then putting it back together without any damage showing. In this narrow-strip, maple tongue-and-groove floor, I'll take up a single, 3"-wide board.

**2** The boards have tongue-and-groove joints along the edges. They are blind-nailed on a diagonal through the tongue. First, I locate each nail along the joint with a magnetic nail finder, then mark its location with a pencil.



**3** Next, I use a cordless trim saw to cut down into the joint and through the tongue. The saw has a low rpm that is good for making a plunge cut—always dangerous because the teeth can grab and kick the saw back. I also screw a stop to the floor, placing the screws in the board joints so any damage is less apparent than in the middle.

**4** The carbide teeth are only 1mm wide, so they easily slip into a joint or cut a nail. To make the plunge cut, I set the back edge of the saw's sole against the stop, hold the blade guard open, and slowly lower the spinning blade into the cut. As I move ahead, I slow down a bit as the blade cuts through the nail, then continue with the cut.

**5** Once the board is cut loose, I carefully pry it up with a stiff putty knife, catching and holding each little "lift" with a sharp chisel. It takes quite a while to loosen and lift the board, but careful work pays off with no gouging or splintering of the edges of the boards.



**6** Once the subflooring is exposed, it is easy to see the nails holding the boards in place.

**7** I use another special saw to cut out a section of the subfloor board. This is a European detail sander fitted with a wood-cutting blade.

**8** This particular detail sander can be fitted with a wide range of blades. The one I chose has a long reach and is offset for flush cuts, both necessary features for this type of work.



**9** Next, I pull out the nails holding the rough floorboards in place with an old-fashioned slide-hammer pinch-grip nail puller.

**10** I drive the beak-like jaws down into the wood next to the nail head, then pry back with the long handle. The action of the lever to the side forces the jaws to grip the nail head, and the nail comes right out. Then the section of subfloor board easily lifts out.



## The Short Course

Decorative hinges—like the hammered brass examples here—were popular on cabinet doors for decades.

# on Cabinet Hinges

ANDY OLENICK PHOTO

*Today's hinges come in a variety of traditional shapes, sizes, and styles. Here's how to find the best fit for your old-house cabinets.*

BY DEMETRA APOSPOROS

Period-appropriate cabinets require traditional hinges—this we know. But deciding which types of hinges best suit your old-house kitchen cabinets can be confusing. Moreover, should you ever consider updating your hinges to increase functionality—well, that can be frustrating. How, then, can you wade through today's vast sea of hinge offerings? To start, it helps to think of hinges as being on an evolutionary curve. The earliest were quite simple, functional, and meant to be seen. As time went on, and the styles of cabinet doors changed, hinges became less and less visible, with the most modern offerings in the lot being completely hidden.

### Inset Door

The earliest standardized cabinets were face-frame construction, meaning that the wood edging the front of the cabinet resembles a picture frame, and can be clearly seen. These

cabinets, in use from the 19th century into the 20th century, featured inset doors that sit flush inside the frame's opening. The earliest inset doors were

attached to the cabinet with simple surface hinges—low-tech hinges that are mounted to the front of both cabinet and door. Surface hinges began as purely functional, in basic shapes like T-straps, L's and H's that were designed to hold up well and operate smoothly (although often a little loose in the knuckle), and they could be made out of brass or hammered iron. Surface hinges eventually developed more ornamental designs, like the butterfly hinge, featuring two leaves roughly shaped like a butterfly, sometimes sporting cutout designs.

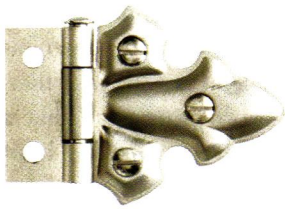
Another basic hinge type used with face-frame cabinets is the butt hinge, where leaves attach to the edge of both cabinet and door, so that the knuckles show but the leaves are hidden. Some of the most popular of these were ball-tipped. Butt hinges afforded cabinets a cleaner look, and they were also quite durable and flexible, allowing for cabinet doors to be taken down when necessary by simply removing the pin. Butt hinges were almost always mortised. As for metals, in 1909 the guide *Builder's Hardware* noted that, "Steel butts of this type can be procured in all finishes, but for high-grade work, bronze metal is always employed."



Butterfly surface hinges were meant to be seen, and could have elaborate lines and cutout patterns.

LEFT: VAN DYKE'S RESTORES





Half decorative, half hidden, hinges like this one were meant to be mortised on the plain, interior-mounting side.



Hoosier cabinets came with their own array of decorative, offset surface hinges.



Ersatz hammered-iron hinges were popular in the 1940s and '50s, and can be purchased today in surface or offset (shown) styles.



Self-closing hinges, like this offset example, contain a hidden spring inside the knuckle.

## Lipped Door

Beginning around 1900 or so, cabinets with lipped doors came into fashion. These doors have a rabbet cut all the way around their back edge, which allows them to close into the opening and sit over the frame at the same time. Cabinets with lipped doors could be readily ordered in an array of sizes from millwork catalogs at the turn of the century. These doors require an offset hinge, one that jogs around the edge of the lip in order for the door to lay flat. Offset hinges can be either surface-mounted

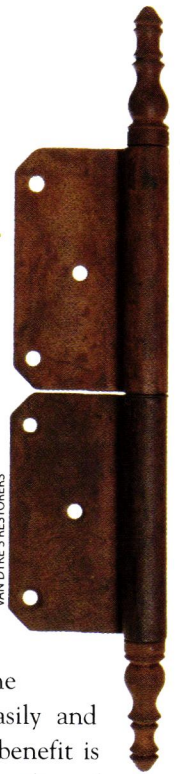
or 'half and half'—that is, mortised into the door's backside and surface-mounted on the cabinet's frame. Decorative styles exist here as well, with the most common being either a simple, elongated brass oval for the surface mount, or one of a rustic hammered black rectangle with trefoil tips on the top and bottom. Hoosier cabinets, those early 20th century must-have items for every well-outfitted kitchen, had their own style of decorative offset surface hinge (one where both sides of the hinge are usually surface-mounted), depending upon the company that made them. Many of these are also available for purchase today, and they can sometimes be a good fit for retro kitchens as well.

Offsets quickly developed to have self-closing mechanisms via a spring in the knuckle that allowed homeowners to close the doors with less effort. These hinges, originally known as 'single-acting hinges,' were being used on other household applications (like lavatory doors) by 1910, and migrated to use on kitchen cabinets within a decade or so. Another point to note on inset hinges is that standard sizes have varied through the years. Pre-1950, a range of inset sizes were used, from  $\frac{1}{2}$ " to  $\frac{5}{8}$ ", to  $\frac{3}{4}$ ", while today's standard inset hinges measure  $\frac{3}{8}$ ", which is something to consider when replacements are needed. It's still possible to find inset hinges in non-standard sizes, but they usually come in a limited range of finishes.

## Overlay Door

Starting in the last century, overlay doors that are larger than the cabinet opening—fully covering the frame—came into popular use. After the mid-1950s, these doors appeared on frameless cabinets—built without rails and stiles, which are also known as European-style cabinets. This type of cabinet always uses interior-mounted hinges that are completely hidden when the cabinet's doors are closed. Also known as a concealed cup hinge or a 35mm hinge (for the European system that developed it), these hinges consist of three parts: a base plate, an arm, and a cup. The cup is fitted

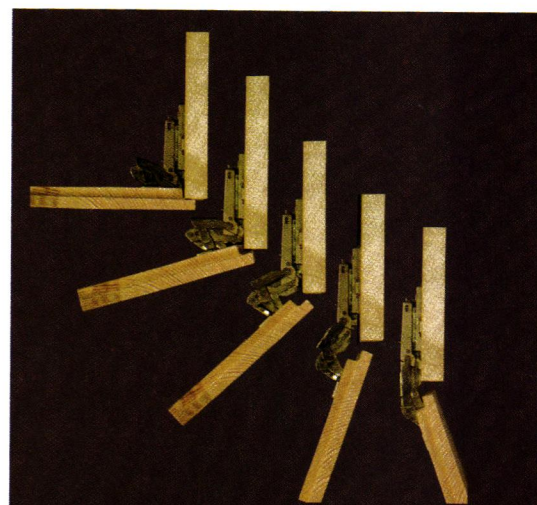
Butt hinges, like this non-mortised example, gave cabinets a cleaner look, but still offered subtle decoration on knuckles ending in ball or finial tips.



VAN DYKE'S RESTORERS

into a mortise cut on the inside of the door, while the arm slides over a base plate screwed into the cabinet's interior. When used on an overlay door, concealed hinges swing the door entirely out of the way of the opening, so that interior pull-out drawers can be mounted flush with the insides of the cabinet, and still pull easily and completely out. Another benefit is that these hinges can be adjusted to hang higher or lower with a simple twist of the screws, without having to remove the door.

Virtually all cabinet hinge styles, including the earliest, are now available with a self-closing feature. And concealed cup hinges can be purchased to fit any style of cabinet door, including inset doors, as long as the right base plate is selected and the door can accommodate the depth needed to fit the cup.



Modern concealed cup hinges hide completely inside of cabinets and move doors out of the way as they open, so interior drawers can mount flush with cabinet sides yet still open easily. They can be used on all styles of cabinet door: overlay, lipped (shown), and inset.

ANDY OLENICK PHOTO



# Double Recovery

**Stricken by a rare, paralyzing illness, Sean Bolen engineered a house move and the beginnings of a restoration from his hospital bed, then salvaged his health along with a house.**

BY GRETCHEN ROBERTS

PHOTOS BY BEALL + THOMAS PHOTOGRAPHY

**A**t a sushi bar in downtown Knoxville, Tennessee, Sean Bolen eats a spicy tuna temaki with no fear of the raw protein that was his downfall two years ago. "That was from undercooked pork, not fish," he points out as he tells me about his most recent house restoration.

Dressed in elegant business attire for his job as a cost analyst, Sean appears an unlikely old-house fanatic. He explains how, several years ago, he was "shanghaied into looking at an older house," and he's been hooked on restoration ever since. "I'd never owned tools in my life, but I taught myself sheetrock repair, carpentry, plumbing, plaster wall repair, you name it," he says, using a box of *Old-House Journal* issues from the '70s and '80s passed to him by a neighbor. "After working with numbers all day, it's cathartic to go home and work with your hands."

### A Life-Threatening Illness

Sean already had two house restorations under his belt in the summer of 2005 when, after eating sausage one day, he fell ill. Three days later his face was paralyzed, and he couldn't close his eyes or move his mouth. "I went to five doctors in five days," Sean recalls. "One doctor thought I had an aggressive form of MS, and one thought I'd had a stroke. They were giving me MRIs, but they couldn't figure out what was wrong with me."

Doctors told Sean to prepare for the worst, and his family started essentially



**Sean Bolen's George Barber house helped motivate his recovery from a terrible illness.**



planning his funeral as he lay in bed, unable to sleep and writhing in pain from his mystery illness. On day five, Sean's mother drove him to the hospital. He tried to get out of the car, but just fell down in a puddle instead. A neurologist finally diagnosed his real condition: Guillain-Barré syndrome, a rare disorder that causes progressive muscle weakness and paralysis.

In Guillain-Barré, the body's immune system attacks the nervous system. Initial symptoms are weakness and tingling in the legs, which may spread to the upper body. The symptoms can increase in intensity until all the muscles are powerless and the patient is almost totally paralyzed, which is what happened to Sean.

When doctors finally diagnosed the disease, they pinned it on the undercooked pork Sean had eaten a few days before getting sick. He was told that he'd spend six months in the hospital, three years in therapy, and be lucky to walk again. To Sean, this was exciting news, because it meant he would live.

## Old-House Fever

While Sean was recovering in the hospital and undergoing grueling physical therapy, he was already busy with a side project. Before becoming sick, Sean had heard about a dilapidated 1891 Queen Anne-style George Barber house sitting a block outside of a designated historic district. Barber, one of the most prolific architects in the late Victorian period, was famous for his catalog architecture, where he sold construction plans by the thousands and promised to modify them for homeowners. Barber's mail-order business was based in Knoxville, and old-house enthusiasts, including Sean, are always eager to restore a Barber home in the city.

Sean had tried to buy the house a few years earlier, but the owners weren't interested. After the house changed hands, the new owners were willing to sell it to Sean—but they wanted to keep the land.

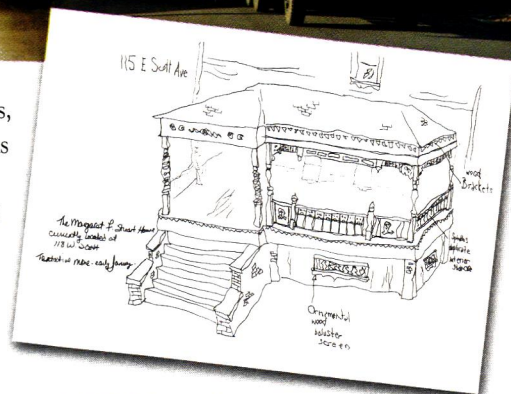
Sean knew the house would have to be moved. "It's a beautiful house on the outside," he says. "As one of the first four built on the street, it has many details a lot of the homes in the historic district just don't have." Inside, however, the house was



less than stellar. "It was gutted to the studs, and the only architectural detail left was the heart pine staircase."

Just one block away, there happened to be an empty lot inside the historic district, so Sean bought the lot and began making plans to buy and move the house. "Being hospitalized delayed everything, but the owners worked with me quite a bit, as I was recovering from being pretty much completely paralyzed."

The move meant the house would lose its historic status, but it was a tradeoff Sean was willing to make to save it. "Besides, I think the house has a greater and more substantial history because it has moved. It has a better story associated with it, and what is history, but the stories people tell?"



**CLOCKWISE: 1) Barber and Eastlake books helped Sean map out his restoration. 2) Sean mocked up several color palettes before settling on one for the porch. 3) the house is trucked across town on moving day. 4) Sean's sketch for the elaborate porch restoration—submitted to the historic zoning board for approval—was done with a shaky hand shortly after leaving the hospital. 5) After being sent home to finish recuperating, Sean walked with a cane for more than six months, but he still worked on the house.**



## Restoration and Recovery

In the hospital, Sean made an amazing recovery. Despite doctors' predictions, he was out in six weeks instead of six months. "A friend at the city planning commission teased me that I improved so quickly so I could work on the house," Sean laughs. "It's true that focusing on specific goals helped me get better, and one of my biggest goals was this house—moving a house this tall was something that had never been done before in the city of Knoxville." But he was far from fully recovered yet. "Healing starts from the inside out, so the last thing you get back is feeling in your fingers and toes. In physical therapy, they'd throw different-shaped blocks into a bag and I'd have to figure out whether one was a triangle, circle, or square. I couldn't differentiate them."

Sean ran into some physical problems working on the house as well. "One day, we were doing some preliminary work, and I tried to crawl under the house and just physically couldn't do it. And I have no problem crawling in the mud."

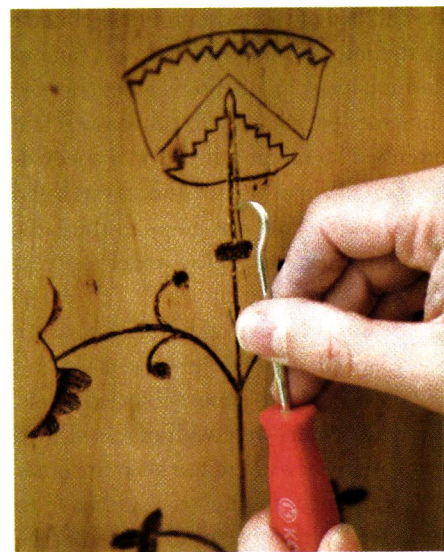
Before the house was moved, Sean and the excavator needed to walk from one lot to another. Though they're separated by just a block, the walk required crossing busy Central Avenue. "I still couldn't move fast because if I tried to run, I'd fall. We started crossing Central and traffic was coming, but I was stuck."



The house was settled on its new foundation, which entailed crews from the utility, cable, and phone companies, emergency services, and various city workers moving or burying lines to get the tall house across the busiest street in the neighborhood, all on a Friday the 13th with a forecast for rain. Then Sean set to the real work of restoration. "The only thing we didn't have to do was put on a new roof. Everything else had to be replaced."

That "everything" included a new

foundation, structural work, new electrical service, plumbing, and all the cosmetic work. Sean hired out some of the major work—electric, plumbing, foundation—but kept the rest for himself. Though he'd just made a miraculous recovery from Guillain-Barré syndrome, it still took him about six months to fully recover mobility and be able to walk without a cane. He didn't begin to work on major projects in the house until he could walk well and keep his balance. Even then, he had to take frequent breaks



**To bring out original details branded into the staircase, Sean used a sander and dental tools, fine-motor tasks that were physically impossible for him a year ago.**





**FAR LEFT:** Sean plans to recreate original Barber inlaid floor patterns in the downstairs rooms; here he snaps a chalk line to begin mocking up a design.

**NEAR LEFT:** Tiger-striped oak milled from a decaying, century-old tree on the property will be used for trim throughout the house.

fat first because he still tired easily.

Sean says he's a "firm believer in sympathetic restoration"—that is, he's against destroying or removing any original features of the house, and he favors restoring with age-appropriate materials and features. As well he should. While in the hospital, Sean heard about an opening on the Knoxville Historic Zoning Commission. Since he couldn't even write at the time, he had a friend fill out his paperwork and was later appointed by the mayor to serve a five-year term, in part thanks to his well-publicized fight to save the house and move it to a new location.

Since the house had been gutted, there wasn't much to destroy. The outside still had three ornate gables, and its under-window trim was in good shape, but the front porch was gone. "We had to reconstruct that from a 1927 Sanborn fire map, where we could see the general footprint," Sean says. He designed a porch with carved brackets, 5½" square posts, and other ornament common in Barber's designs, sketching out the details shortly after leaving the hospital. He gleaned ideas from *Cottage Souvenir No. 2*, Barber's famed 1891 catalog with 120 designs and floor plans for homes, verandas, and more.

Now that the structural work is com-

plete, Sean is beginning the cosmetic work. He's ready to lay floors, using his own "Victorian-appropriate designs," and inspiration from Charles Eastlake's *Hints on Household Taste: The Classic Handbook of Victorian Interior Decoration*, using three types of wood—maple, cherry, and oak—that would have been available at the time to create inlays. He's also working on designs for trim work using tiger-striped oak milled from a decaying century-old tree on the property that had been in danger of falling on the house. Sean's two young daughters have chosen their rooms, and Sean's painted them already. He's just finished an hours-long project: stripping and sanding the original heart pine wood staircase, without damaging the ornamental designs branded into the newel posts. "I used dental tools, actually," he says—a fine-motor task he couldn't have even contemplated a year ago.

### A Happy Ending

"After restoring my very first house I realized how important it is to be happy where you live," explains Sean. "In an old house, you get spoiled into the fact that a house isn't where you live, a house is a home."

From the top floor of the house, a window facing southeast shows off views

of downtown Knoxville and the Smoky Mountains. "The views out here are incredible," says Sean. Inside, he loves how the layout common to Victorian homes creates intimacy and separation at the same time. "You have individual rooms, but each one has an intimate space with a bay window or a little nook somewhere."

Saving this building was an accomplishment, Sean says, not only for the city and the house, but for himself. "Because of what I'd just gone through, I was determined to make it happen." 🏠

*Gretchen Roberts writes about food, homes, and gardens from her 107-year-old Craftsman-style house in Knoxville, Tennessee.*



**RIGHT:** Sean continues his work on the house, aiming for its full recovery as well.

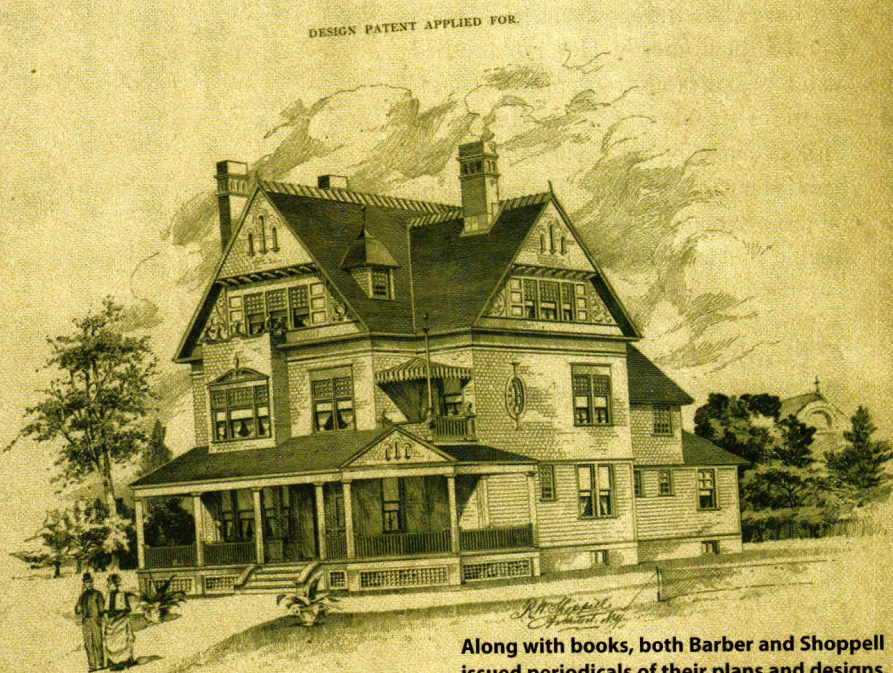


Style

# DREAM Houses *by Mail*

The house plan catalogs that line the newsstands today trace their roots to three Victorian architects-cum-publishers: Palliser, Shoppell, and Barber.

By JAMES C. MASSEY  
& SHIRLEY MAXWELL



Along with books, both Barber and Shoppell issued periodicals of their plans and designs, such as this number from Shoppell.

A homeowner of the late 19th century must have summoned a bit of courage to be the first on the block to build a house from plans ordered straight out of a catalog. Once America caught the mail-order house fever, though, there was no turning back. The nation's burgeoning suburban neighborhoods took on an aspect of stylish prosperity that is often still apparent—and ordering plans by mail has never lost its appeal for prospective home builders.

Never before in the history of American building had such an array of architectural styles and embellishments been presented to middle-income home buyers and builders. Nor, for that matter, had there ever been so many middle-class





Palliser's plan books contain several Victorian houses with immense, highly ornamented, Stick-Style porches, hence the attribution to him of these residences in Orange Grove, New Jersey. The spindlework in the gable topping the three-storey porches ranks among the finest of its era.

American home owners. With the post-Civil War development of a nationwide railroad system and the growth of local trolley lines leading to new suburbs, the expansion of the United States Postal Service, and better and cheaper printing processes, the stage was set for a massive assault on the mailboxes of Middle America. Sales catalogs touting every type of product from patent medicines to clothing to home furnishings and, yes, even house plans poured forth. Enterprising, self-proclaimed architects offered fully developed plans and detailed working drawings for Queen Anne and Colonial Revival-style houses to an eager market. These drawings were very different from the tiny elevation sketches and floor plans that had been featured since the 1850s in books by authors such as Andrew Jackson Downing and Samuel Sloan, as well as in magazines like *Godey's Lady's Book*. Among the many companies that offered mail-order architecture, three

stood out: Palliser, Palliser, and Company of Bridgeport, Connecticut; Robert W. Shoppell and his Cooperative Building Plan Association of New York; and George F. Barber of Knoxville, Tennessee.

### Architecture in an Envelope

These new kind of plans were a far cry from the pre-cut houses that companies like Sears, Montgomery Ward, and Aladdin would later sell by the boxcar-load, ready to be erected in early 20th-century suburbs. Nonetheless, they were a major innovation toward meeting the housing needs of a rapidly growing middle class that would otherwise have had no access to architectural services beyond what their local builders and carpenters could provide. They did, however, offer working construction drawings that came with detailed specifications to guide local builders and carpenters.

Not surprisingly, the plans-by-mail movement was not greeted with enthusi-



George and Charles Palliser not only ran their business out of Bridgeport, Connecticut, but they also built some of their plans there, such as these double, or twin, houses with typical Victorian bays and gable ornament.





**One of the most popular of Shoppell's designs was No. 216, built here in Berwyn Heights, Maryland, in 1888. The three-storey projecting semi-octagonal tower is distinctive and easy to recognize, and can be found in many communities, as well as in several related designs.**

asm by formally trained architects, whose profession was just beginning to be recognized. They bemoaned what they saw as a low level of aesthetic value in the mass architectural market and, of course, worried about the effect on their own incomes. The building public, however, appears to have found the idea appealing—especially in exurban areas where there was no design talent to be had beyond the local builder.

Palliser, Palliser, and Co. led the way. The Palliser brothers, George and Charles, were British citizens who came to the United States in the 1870s. George Palliser, a carpenter, settled first in Newark, New Jersey, but soon moved to the less competitive venue of Bridgeport, where he was rather promptly joined in his mill-work business by his brother Charles. In Bridgeport, George made the very useful acquaintance of P.T. Barnum (of Barnum

and Bailey Circus fame), who became his most important client. Together, Barnum and George Palliser built large developments of English-style Gothic Revival cottages. Although lacking any formal architectural training, George Palliser did know a great deal about building and materials, and he had considerable skill in carpentry and drawing. These assets were helpful when he came up with an innovative and highly successful way to sell house plans through a series of booklets and catalogs that invited readers to order the plans directly from the authors.

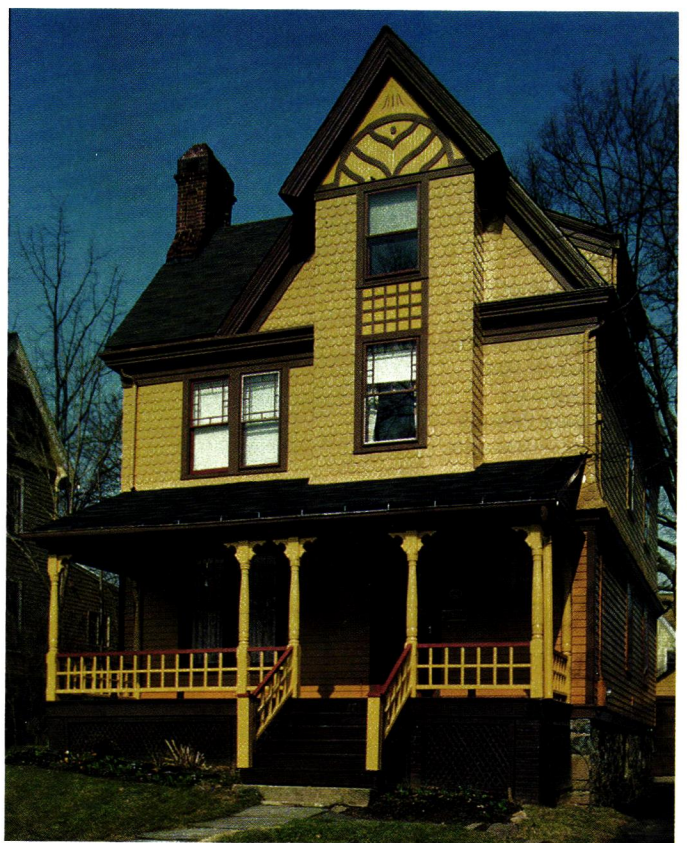
In 1876 George Palliser published *Model Homes for the People: A Complete Guide to the Proper and Economical Erection of Buildings*. This inexpensive booklet offered complete house plans for as little as \$3.50 a set, and it was a sell-out. It was followed in 1879 by *George and Charles Palliser's American Cottage Homes*, a much

pricier book at \$5.00, but also a much heftier one, offering an expansive architectural menu of 50 different designs. Palliser queried his potential buyers carefully to come up with individualized designs based on the buyers' needs and tastes. Generally, Palliser houses (which were built in the thousands across the United States) had strong Gothic Revival overtones, with steeply gabled roofs, large and often elaborate chimneys, and cast-iron cresting along the roof ridges. They were most often constructed of wood, with decorative wood or slate shingles covering the upper storeys, and with the requisite Victorian bays, porches, and verandahs enlivening the footprint of the building. The Pallisers moved their offices to New York in 1883, and although the firm continued until about 1920, the brothers eventually took separate architectural paths—George continuing his residential work and Charles

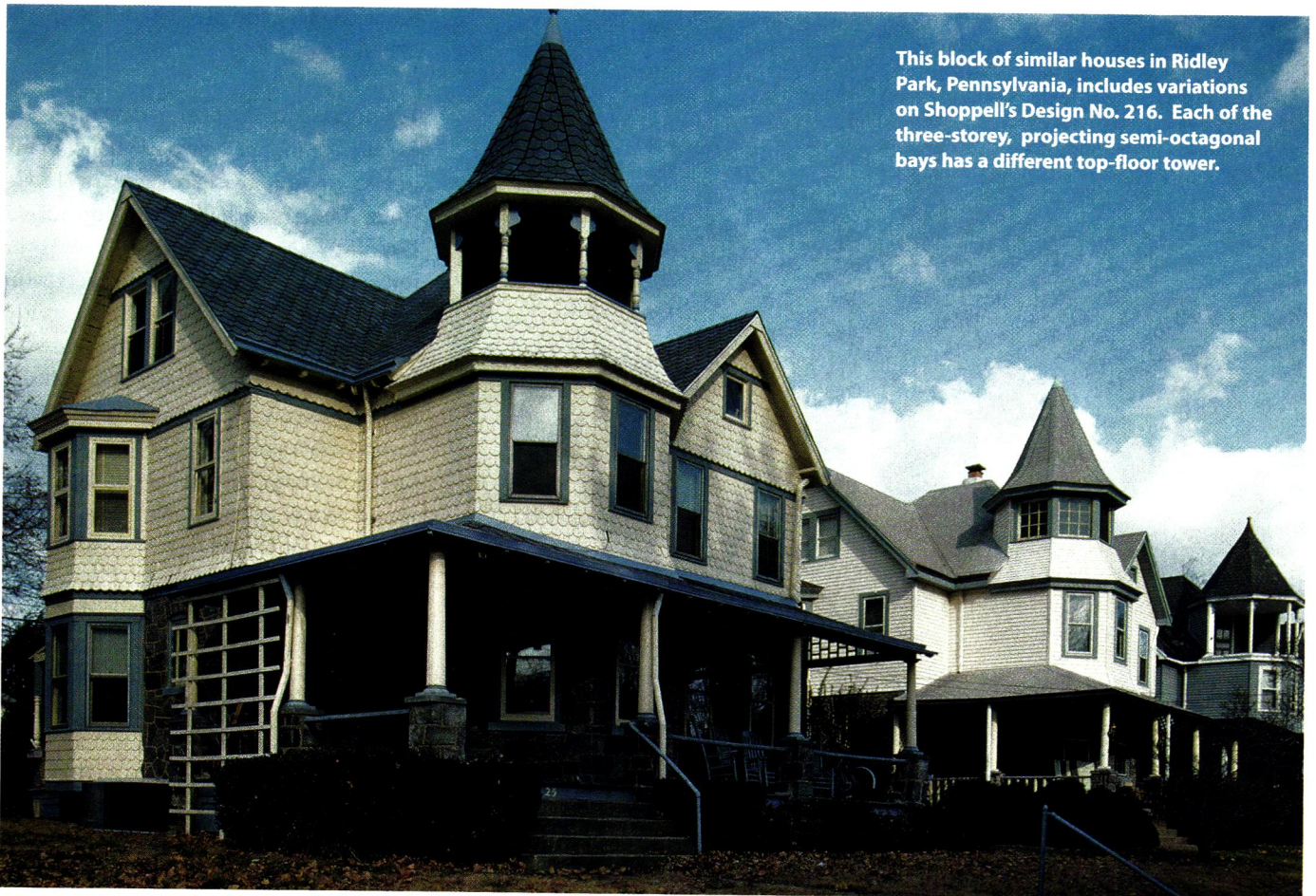




This handsome house is attributed to Shoppell, as it is on a block with several documented examples in Madison, New Jersey. Note the cut-away corners on the first floor, effectively creating bay windows.



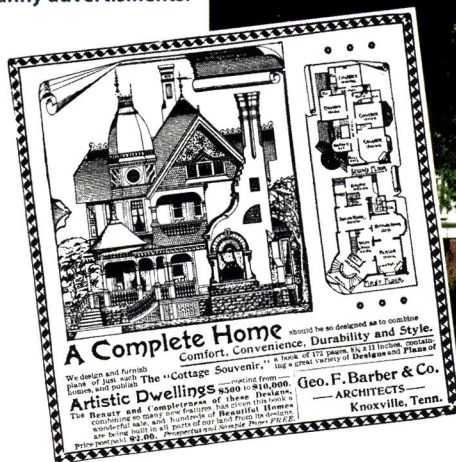
Also in Madison, this Shoppell house is stylish but not overblown, a solid middle-class example. The architect overlooked no potential client, designing residences from small cottages to mansions.



This block of similar houses in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania, includes variations on Shoppell's Design No. 216. Each of the three-storey, projecting semi-octagonal bays has a different top-floor tower.



The most imaginative of the mail-order architects was George Barber, whose house designs spread far from his Knoxville base through his canny advertisements.



The 1891 Nunan House, built in Jacksonville, Oregon, is based on a Barber design in *Cottage Souvenir* (inset). The unique brick cutaway corner and chimney design are downright exotic touches for an otherwise conventional wood-frame house.

Barber's Design No. 61 was the source of the Hollywood Cemetery Superintendent's Residence in Richmond, Virginia, in 1894. It is filled with complex shapes and angles and topped by a picturesque tower room under a sloping, curved roof.

becoming more involved in other aspects of building.

## Designs in Serial Form

Robert W. Shoppell gave the house plans industry a new twist in the early 1880s when he established the Cooperative Building Plan Association in New York, setting up a stable of 50 architects who churned out plans for Shoppell's quarterly publications. *Artistic Modern Houses of Low Cost* first appeared in 1881, and the plans were issued for years in a magazine format. Shoppell's designs often featured one or more distinctive two- or three-storey octagonal or rectangular bays, topped by conical or mansard roofs. The bays were frequently planted dead center on the front elevation or attached at one corner to the main block of the house. The house itself might be an otherwise fairly mundane two-storey gable-roofed number. A frequently found feature was a polygonal center hall with a fireplace and an elaborate stairway, shielded from the front entryway by a vestibule and storm doors. Shoppell's architects favored "cot-



**Tall and thin octagonal towers, complex verandahs, mixed materials, and upstairs mini-porches too small to use all help mark the 1897 William Leary House in Edenton, North Carolina, as a Barber design. Though Barber's High-Victorian exuberance may have been a bit behind the times as the sedate Colonial Revival style was beginning to catch on, his large clientele found his selection of designs in many sizes and styles useful.**

tage windows" with small panes in the upper sash and a single large pane in the lower sash. Shoppell's package included "working plans with complete directions, details, specifications, and estimates of quantities, at a fractional part of the charges made by architects." For a short time he even offered developers assistance from the Association's loan department in securing construction loans.

While Palliser's and Shoppell's houses were distinctive enough to make the many that still survive fairly easy to spot, it was George Franklin Barber of Knoxville who produced the most flamboyant designs of all. Barber's exuberantly large, round corner towers; his giddy array of tall, skinny minarets; his impossibly tiny and totally inaccessible porches and balconies; and his circular porches attached like satellite moons to the corners of the house or the main porch are Victorian eye candy as irresistible to today's old-house watcher as they were to Barber's many clients. While Barber thought of his designs mostly as Romanesque (probably because of their rounded towers and multiple arched openings), most OHJ readers probably would describe them as Queen Anne and Colonial Revival.

Though he had little formal education, Barber was an avid amateur horticulturist and geologist. He was also a self-trained but supremely confident architect with an extraordinary grasp of the American public's yearning for novel and "tasteful" houses. In 1888, poor health prompted him to move with his wife and child from his native Illinois, where he had begun publishing booklets of house plans, to the warmer climate of Knoxville, Tennessee. In Knoxville, he expanded his publishing efforts. The most important of his Knoxville productions was *Cottage Souvenir* No. 2, which brought him a national audi-

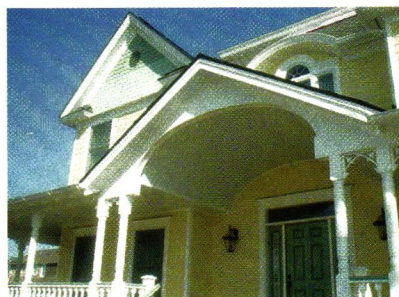


ence. This collection and his later books included plans and perspectives, as well as some photos of built houses. In 1895, he began a long-running monthly magazine, *American Homes*, described as "a journal devoted to planning, building, and beautifying the home"—and, of course, selling house plans. For a fee, Barber's large staff of architects and draftsmen would alter or make substantial changes to published plans. Barber's son, Charles Ives Barber, trained in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania, joined his father's firm in 1910. The firm focused primarily on house

designs but also sometimes did churches, stores, and other buildings.

Other house-plan books—among them Comstock's, Bicknell's, and, perhaps most important, those by Canadian Fred T. Hodgson—served large numbers of late 19th- and early 20th-century home builders with designs for excellent, sober family dwellings. Yet it is those three freewheeling pioneers—Palliser, Shoppell, and Barber—who make our hearts beat faster when we spy the houses that leapt off the pages of their catalogs and into our neighborhoods so many years ago. 🏠





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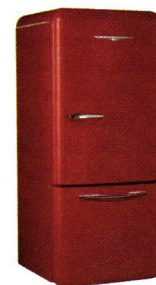


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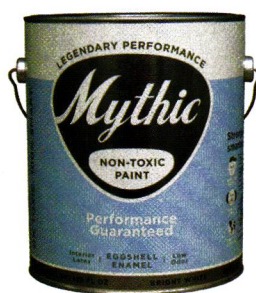
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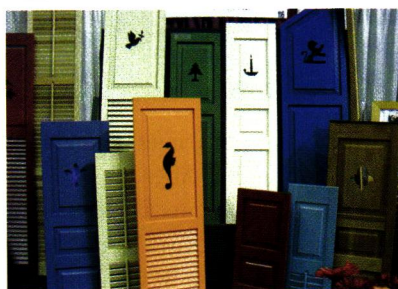


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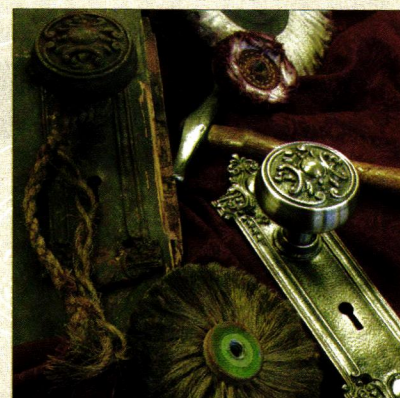
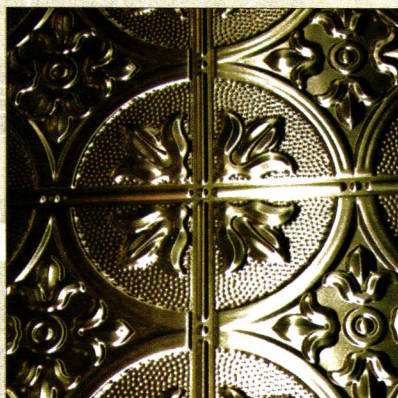
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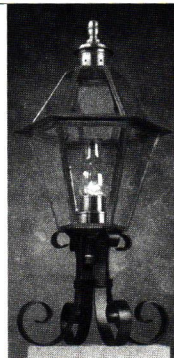
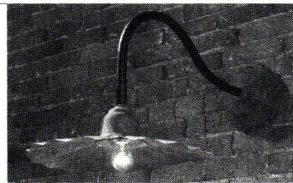
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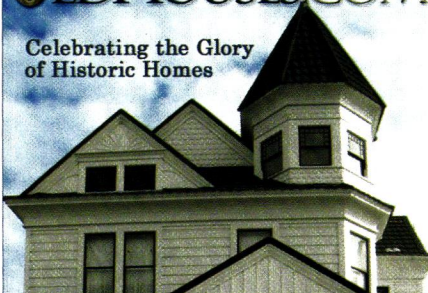
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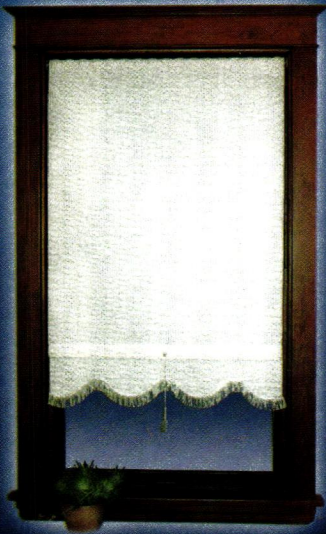


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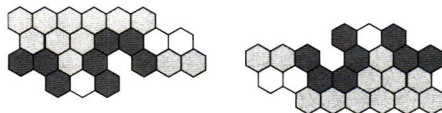
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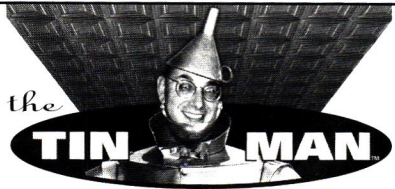


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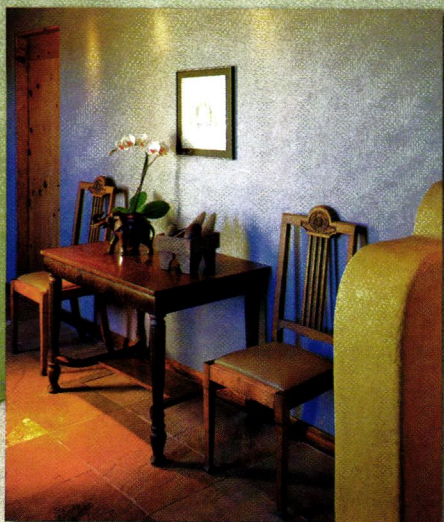


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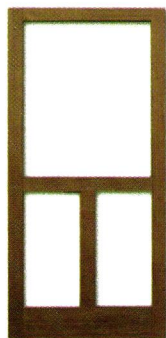
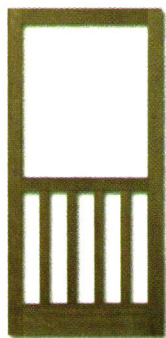
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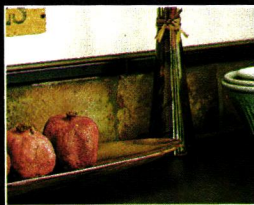
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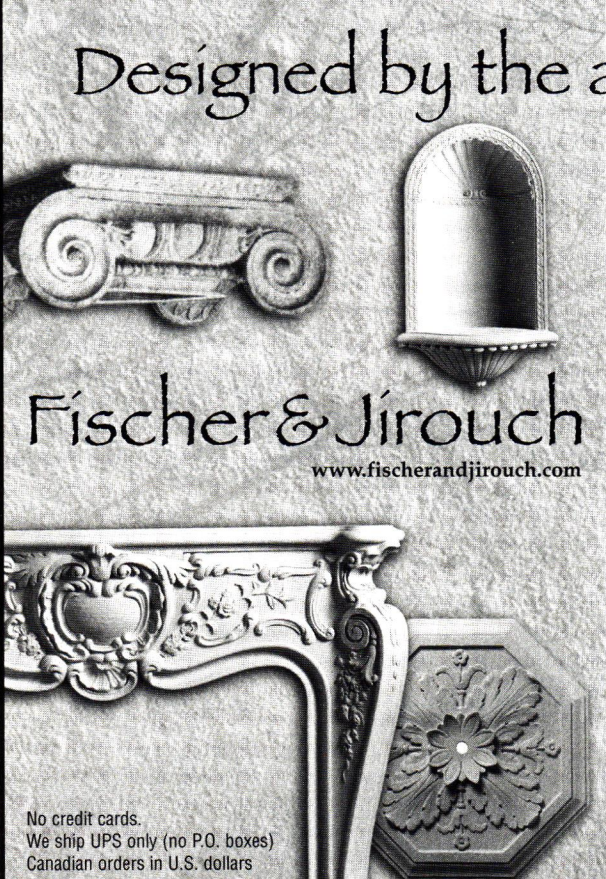
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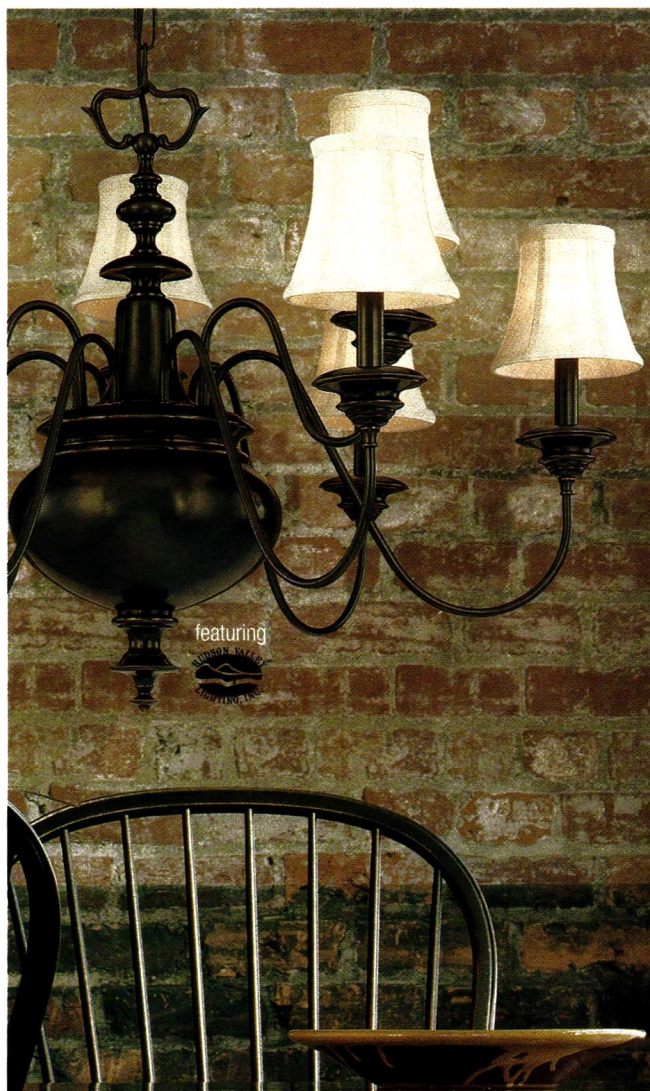
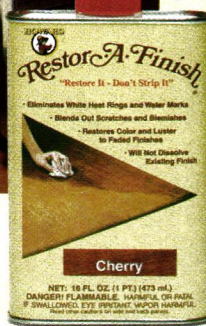
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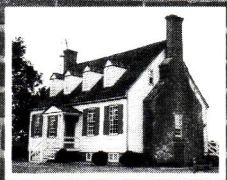


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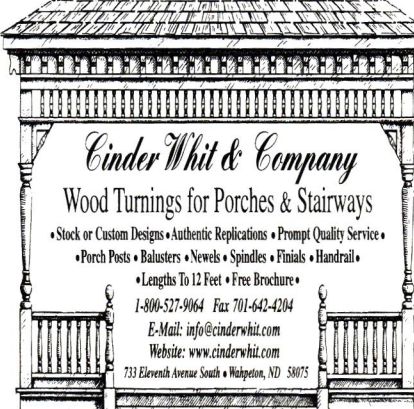
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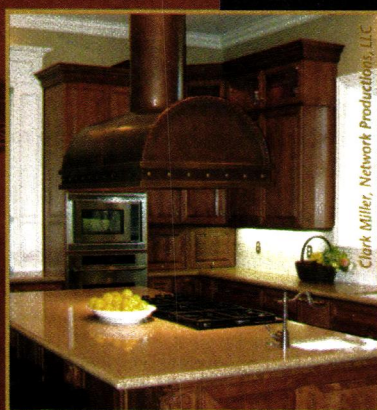
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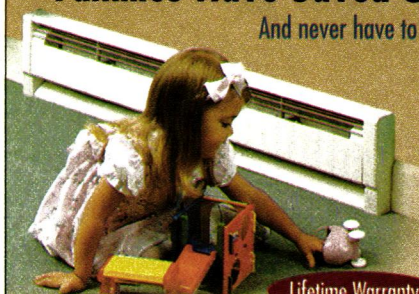
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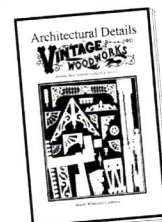
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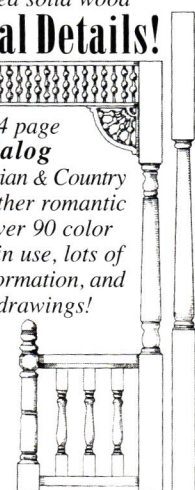
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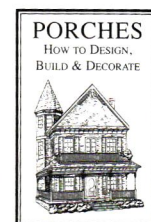
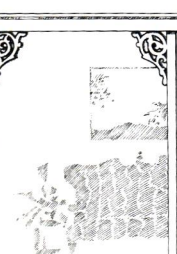
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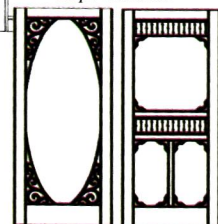
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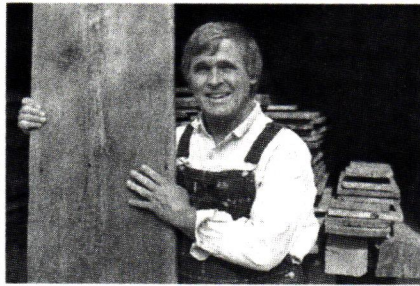


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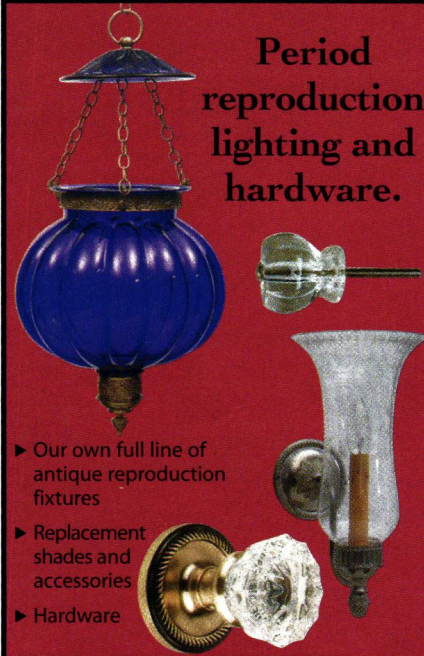
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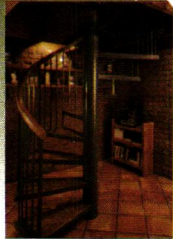
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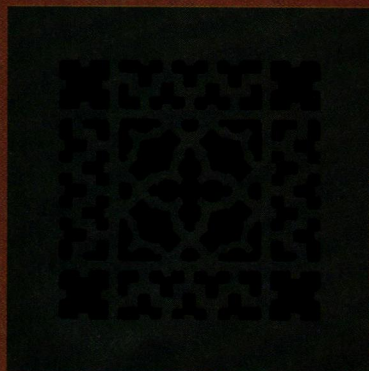


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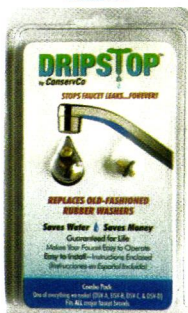
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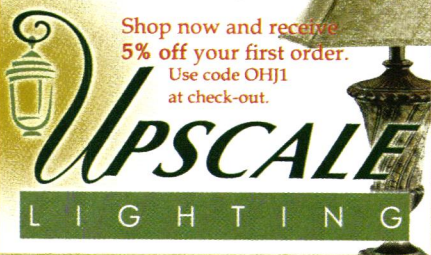
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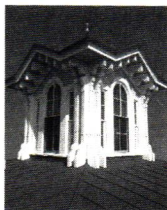
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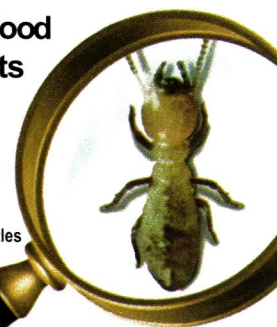
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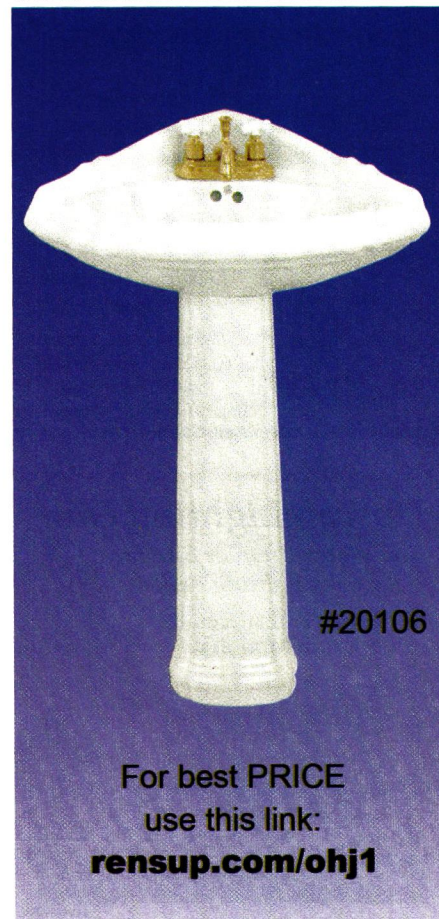
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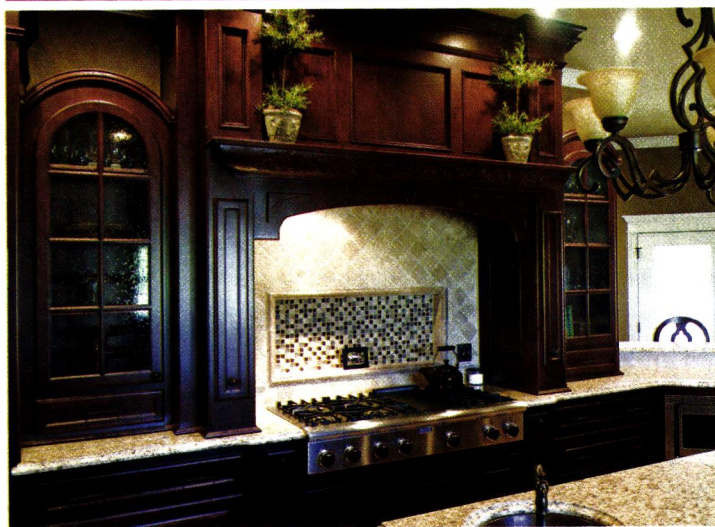
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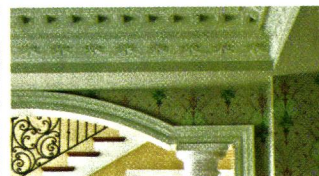
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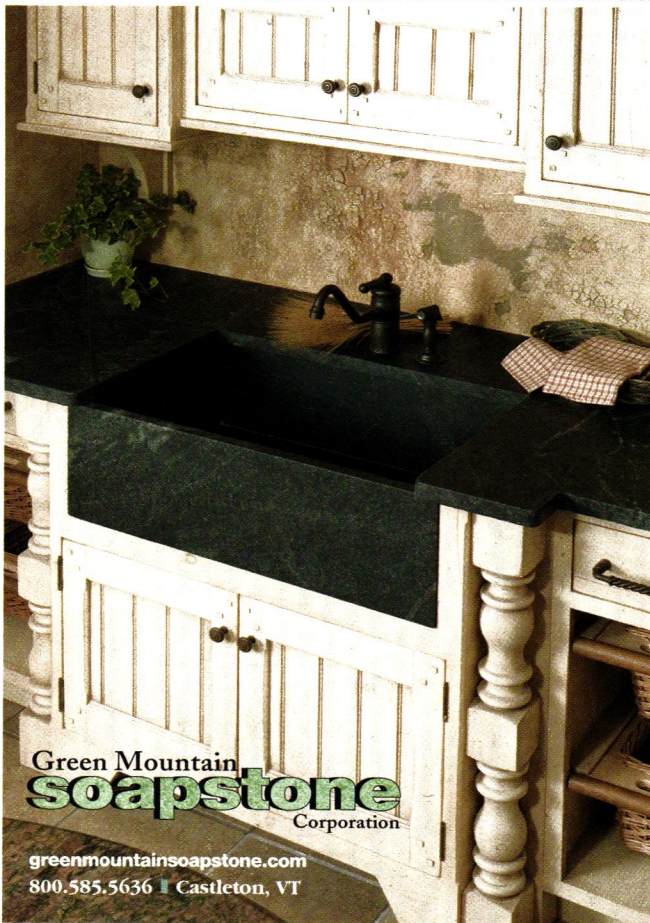


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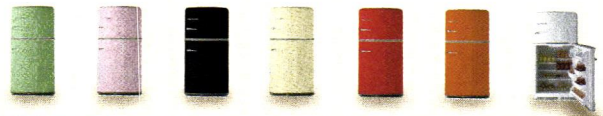




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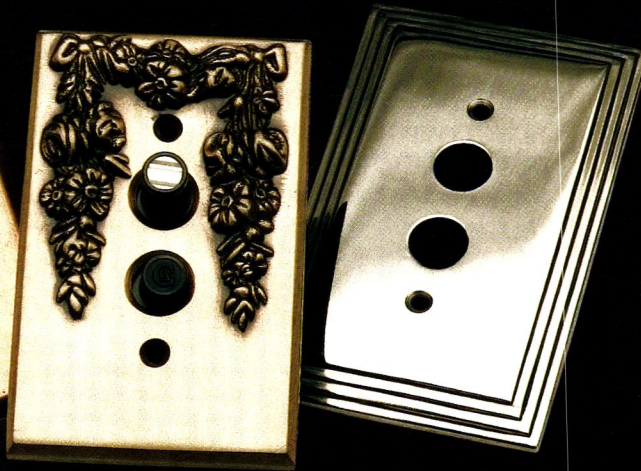
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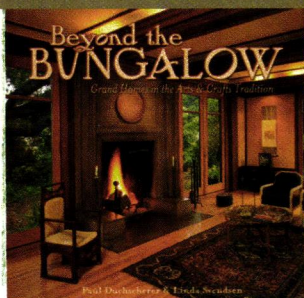
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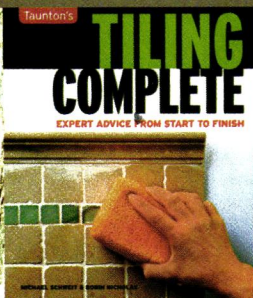
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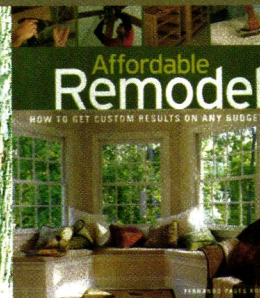
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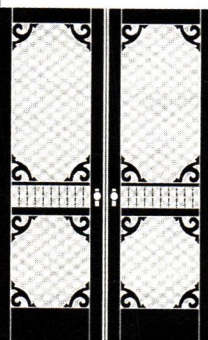
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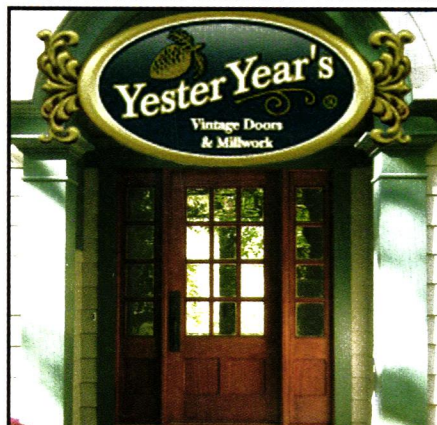
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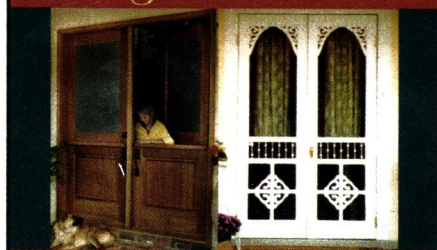
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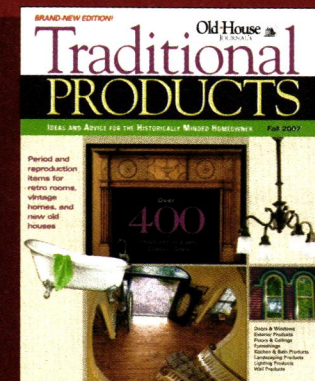
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☐ \$150,000 to \$250,000  
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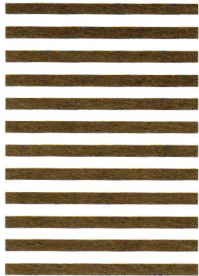
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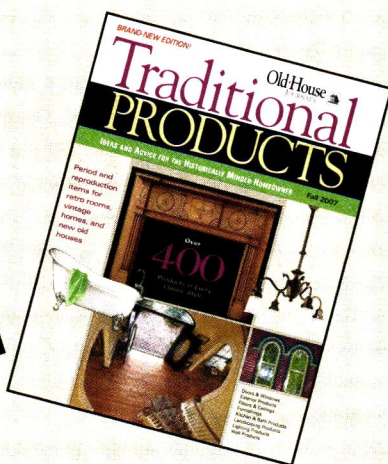
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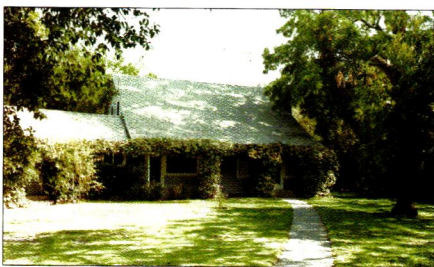


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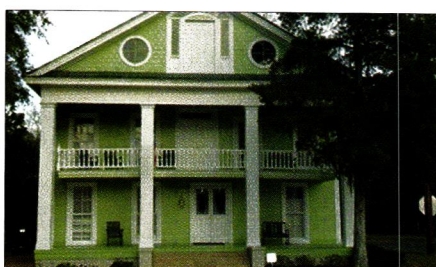
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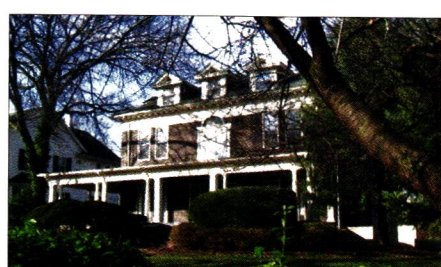
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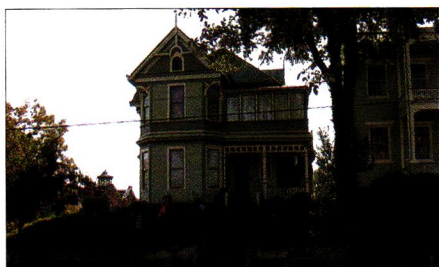
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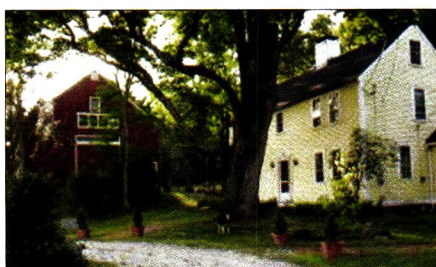
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**AMHERST, NH**—One of Amherst's oldest homes dating to 1740. Charming center chimney Colonial with huge detached barn. On 3.5 acres perfect for horses. Wonderful original features including 4 fireplaces, wide plank floors and original wall paintings. 5 bedrooms and 2.5 baths. Quiet country road minutes from the village. Close to Souhegan Woods Golf Course. \$549,000. David Deysher, Historic & Distinctive Properties, 603-485-8300. [www.historicprop.com](http://www.historicprop.com)



**FLEMING, NY**—Don't miss this once in a lifetime opportunity to own a piece of history. This 3,074 sq. ft. home sits on 2 acres and is currently being used as a bed and breakfast. The owners have painstakingly renovated this gem back to its glory days keeping history in mind. Has been featured on HGTV. \$389,900. Jason Barry, Auburn Sherlock Homes Real Estate, Inc., 315-730-3038, [jbarry1600@adelphia.net](mailto:jbarry1600@adelphia.net)



**WICKFORD VILLAGE, RI**—Waterfront! Just renovated Victorian home on the harbor! New heat, septic, kitchen, baths, air conditioning, decor and more! 4 bedrooms, 4 baths including a fabulous master suite, fireplaces, wood floors, patio, and a lovely yard. Walk to shops, schools, library and park in this wonderful historic town. Offered at \$1,250,000. Moore Properties, 401-295-1708, [info@mooreproperties.net](mailto:info@mooreproperties.net), [www.mooreproperties.net](http://www.mooreproperties.net)



**SAN MARCOS, TX**—Beautiful, stately restored 1909 Greek Revival in Historic District. 4,545 sqft; 4 bedrooms/3baths plus efficiency 2-room apartment. Large formal dining room; formal parlor and family living too. Large master w/big walk-in, huge bath w/claw tub, separate shower! Kitchen remodeled: JennAire, pantry, island, breakfast area. Detached garage; superior landscaping! \$625,000. Call Ronda Reagan Properties 512-396-9001 or [Ronda@RondaReagan.com](mailto:Ronda@RondaReagan.com). [www.RondaReagan.com](http://www.RondaReagan.com)



**AMELIA COUNTY, VA**—Barrett/Chumney House circa 1790. Located on 13+ acres. 45 minutes west of downtown Richmond. Land grant from King George II. Hand carved reeded mouldings and mantles. Over 3,000 sq. ft., heart pine floors, 4 bedrooms, 2 baths, large formal rooms, 6 fireplaces. Pastoral views, fenced pastures, pond, stable, garage, workshop and gardener's shed. \$499,995. Deborah James Dendler, RE/MAX Commonwealth Group, 804-402-8662. [VirginiaAntiqueRealEstate.com](http://VirginiaAntiqueRealEstate.com)





**FREDERICKSBURG, VA**—"Braehead" circa 1859. Lee had breakfast here the morning of the battle. Grand Greek Revival w/6,000+ sq. ft. on private 18.88 acres w/National Park on three sides. Minutes from DC commuter train. 8 fireplaces. 7 baths. 8 bedrooms. Two kitchens. Marbleized woodwork in public rooms, heartpine floors, pocket doors. 11' ceilings. Conveys w/historic easement. \$995,000. Dave Johnston, "The Old House Man®" 804-633-7123. AntiqueProperties.com

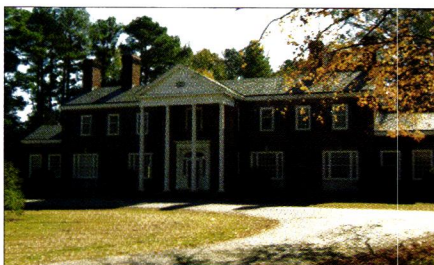
## SPOTLIGHT HOUSE



**MONROE TWP., NJ**—The Holmes-Tallman House, circa 1867, is a majestic example of Carpenter Square Italianate design. Listed on the National & New Jersey Historic Places Registers for its exterior architectural value and irreplaceable plaster and wood detail. Located on 6 acres of farmland in the heart of New Jersey. The house contains two parlors, library, dining room, den, large kitchen, conservatory, ten bedrooms, office, maid/au pair rooms and ante-chambers plus cupola. \$1,800,000. Susan Schneider-Baker, Realty Executives SUCCESS! 908-735-0188



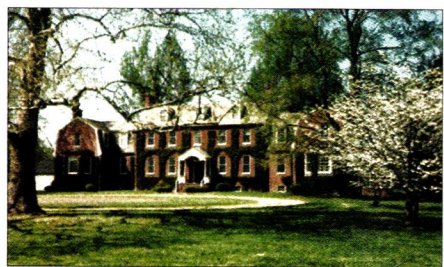
**GRAVEL HILL, VA**—"The Tavern and Store at Gravel Hill." Circa 1799 & 1840. Two early places used as one. Charming & elegant located in a rural historic district- Village of Gravel Hill. Original doors, floors, woodwork, and mantels. 9 fireboxes. Porches, brick walkways through several gardens with fountains. Many boxwoods and large trees on 3.92 acres. A great value at \$495,000. Toby Beavers, Antique Properties, 434-409-6510 or TobyBeavers@comcast.net



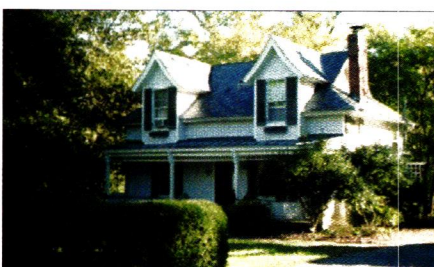
**LAWRENCEVILLE, VA**—A Private Estate Property. 1942 brick Colonial Revival manor house on 35 acres with mature pines. Georgian type arches and moldings through-out. The 4,317 sq.ft. includes a grand foyer and parlor, formal dining room, large kitchen with breakfast room, 5 bedrooms, 6 baths and many extras. 5 zone central heat and air. \$689,000. Max Sempowski, Antique Properties, 434-391-4855. www.oldhouseproperties.com



**MIDDLESEX COUNTY, VA**—Rural Paradise. LaGrange, circa 1749 planter home with 4 fireplaces. 65 acres of privacy offering fantastic dependencies: soaring screened pavilion enclosing pool, summer kitchen, fireplace, attached pool house with full bath, cedar sauna, and upstairs office. Appalachian-style log cabin with loft; timber frame low-country building for winery, gift shop, meeting room; + more! \$653,000. Jane Ludwig, Bay Meadows Real Estate, 804-436-6341.



**NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY, VA**—West End, circa 1790. Own a part of early Virginia history. Impeccably restored. 32+/- acres. Close to Chesapeake Bay. Spectacular views. Grand living and dining rooms, library, gourmet kitchen, morning room, breakfast room, tavern room, and 8 fireplaces. Master bedroom w/lavish bath, 4 additional bedrooms and 3 baths. 2,400 sq. ft. guesthouse. Dependencies. \$3,200,000. Jane Ludwig, Bay Meadows Real Estate, 804-436-6341 or 804-435-0140.



**RICHMOND, VA**—"Workmen's Cottage" circa 1895 on 1/2 acre with mature landscaping. Built by carpenters who built The Jefferson & Ginter Park. Surrounded by historic homes on quiet streets. Has large front porch, patio, dog run, large rooms and 4 fireplaces. 1,835+/- sq. ft. of original floors, woodwork, doors, slate roof and shutters. \$299,000. Donna Lewis, Antique Properties, 434-607-6118 or Donna@Old HousesVirginia.com



**WHEATLAND, WY**—Classic 1912 Cape Cod farmhouse at the foothills of Laramie Mountains. Two residences on 35 acres: five bedroom, two bath 3,417 sq. ft. home with 800 sq. ft. guesthouse. Abundant trees, gardens, and lavender plants. Vintage 1912 red barn, metal loafing sheds, corrals, 1940s dairy barn, 3 stall garage/shop, and dog kennel. Nature lover's paradise. \$567,000. Ellen Alley, Coldwell Banker 1st Wheatland Realty, 307-322-2800 or 307-331-1660





## Growing Pains

Like adolescents on the cusp of adulthood, some old houses go through growth spurts of the teenage kind, which can result in awkward transformations. Take, for example, these two bungalows sitting side-by-side out West. One (above, right) is defined by classic wide, overhanging eaves; clapboard siding; and a low-pitched, hipped roof. The other (above, left) has grown a Modernistic second storey with caveless roof-wall junctions, vertical siding, and a towering flat roof.

In the words of our contributor, "The addition seems a little uncoordinated." We think that for old houses, growing up is hard to do. 🏠

**Win \$100:** If you spot a classic example of remuddling, send us clear color prints. We'll award you \$100 when your photos are published. The message is more dramatic if you send along a picture of a similar unremuddled building. (Original photography only, please; no clippings. Also, we reserve the right to republish the photos online and in other publications we own.) Remuddling Editor, OLD-HOUSE JOURNAL, 4125 Lafayette Center Dr., Suite 100, Chantilly, VA 20151.

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